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INDIAN NATIONALIS MOVEMENT AND THOUGHT

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To

My esteemed

COLLEAGUE,

and

My revered

TEACHER

In my student days,

Dr. R. K. Singh,

M. A., LL. B., D. Ed., (HARVARD)

PRINCIPAL,

B. R. COLLEGE, AGRA.

Preface

The present work is based on my preliminary studies on Indian Nationalism, which I took up after completing my research-work for the doctorate degree. These studies cover the relevant published sources, mostly of a secondary nature, official reports and writings, memoirs, biographies and works of eminent Indian leaders, and accounts of foreigners who visited the country and reported on political developments. I am quite conscious of the limitations and short-comings of this work. It is in no way an authoritative and exhaustive version of the political movement, which will be possible only when I have examined the material available in unpublished official documents, records of the political parties, proceedings of the legislatures etc. This book is primarily intended to meet the requirements of advanced students who are expected to be familiar with the outline of the subject. It will also serve for general reading and may be utilized with profit by teachers in the degree colleges and universities. If it helps the reader in acquiring a clear understanding of the subject, I will consider my labour amply rewarded.

I am very much grateful to Dr. Bisheshwar Prasad, D. Litt., my teacher at the Allahabad University and now Director, C.I.S. Historical Section, Ministry of Defence, Simla, for the pains he has been taking in guiding my studies. I am obliged to Prof J. C. Taluqdar, Head of the Department of History, St. John's College, Agra, for his sympathy and encouragement. My thanks are also due to Mr. B. S. Kesavan, Librarian, National Library, Calcutta, for making excellent arrangements of my studies during summer vacations.

20th. Oct. 1950,
Agra.

V. P. S. RAGHUVANSHI,

Where Is What ?

GENERAL

OBSERVATIONS ON INDIAN NATIONALISM AND THE CHARACTER AND INFLUENCES OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION.

INTRODUCTORY 1-10

Rise of Indian Nationalism—The Indian National Congress—The Sepoy Rebellion 1857—Character of the National Movement—Stages of Development.

I. BACKGROUND OF INDIAN NATIONALISM 11-25

Progress of British Rule—Novelty of British Rule—Mutiny and its Significance—Reactionary Role of British Administration—Revolutionary Role of British Administration—The Reform Movement.

PART ONE

THE PERIOD OF THE RISE AND GROWTH OF CONSTITUTIONAL AGITATION (1875—1900).

II. THE SEED-TIME OF INDIAN NATIONALISM (1876-85) 31-46

Progress and Recovery—Early Public Associations—The Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton (1876-80)—The Indian Association—The Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon (1880-84)—Foundation of the Indian National Congress—Save the British Empire Theory.

III. ASCENDANCY OF LIBERALISM (1885—
1905) 47-62

Progress of Constitutional Agitation—Popularity of the Congress—The Work of the Congress—Success of the Congress—Weakness of the Congress—The Rise of Muslim Communalism.

IV. THE CONSTITUTIONAL SCHOOL OF
POLITICAL THOUGHT AND EMINENT
PERSONALITIES 63-75

The Westernised Environment—Faith in British Justice—Constitutionalism—The Political Creed—Dadabhai Naoroji—Sir Surendranath Bannerjee—Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

PART TWO

*THE PERIOD OF THE RISE AND GROWTH OF
EXTREMISM AND MILITANT NATIONALISM (1900—1919).*

V. RISE OF EXTREMISM AND MILITANT
NATIONALISM (1900—1912) 79-98

New India of Commerce and Industry—Tory Misrule—Hindu Revivalism—Economic Discontent of the Lower Classes—Foreign Influences—Treatment of Indians Abroad—Progress of Extremist Agitation—The Boycott and Swadeshi Movement—The Revolutionary Movement—The Movement Abroad—Failure of the Revolutionary Movement.

VI. TRIUMPH OF REACTION AND MUSLIM
POLITICS 99-114

The Rise of the Extremist Party—The Calcutta Congress 1906—Surat Congress 1907—The British Policy of Conciliation and Repression—The Policy of Counterpoise of Native against Native—The Muslim Deputation—The Muslim League—The Viceroyalty of Lord Hardinge.

VII. THE EXTREMIST AND REVOLUTIONARY SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT—EMINENT PERSONALITIES 115-131

The Extremist Schools—Religion and Extremism—Revolt against Liberalism—Political Technique—The Revolutionary Schools—Terrorists—Revolutionaries ; Bal Gangadhar Tilak—Lala Lajpat Rai—Har Dayal—Arabindo Ghose—Bepin Chandra Pal.

VIII. INDIA AND WORLD WAR I (1914-18) ... 132-149

Home Rule Agitation—Aims and Outlook of Annie Besant — Progress of Agitation — The Congress—League Concordat 1916 — Revolutionary Activity—The August Announcement and after—Secession of the Liberals.

PART THREE

THE GANDHIAN PERIOD—THE PERIOD OF CONSTRUCTIVE NATIONALISM AND MASS MOVEMENTS (1919-47).

IX. THE PUNJAB WRONGS, KHILAFAT AND NON-COOPERATION 153-172

The War and the New Nationalism—Mahatma Gandhi —The Rowlatt Bills and Satyagraha—Martial Law in the Punjab—The Khilafat Agitation—Tussle in the Congress—Progress of the Movement—The Suspension of the Movement.

X. THE SWARAJIST POLITICS (1922-28) ... 173-189

Repression and Reaction—The Swaraj Party—Aims and Methods of Swarajists—Work in the Legislatures—Demoralization of the Council-Front.

XI. PREPARATION AND FIGHT FOR SWARAJ (1928-30) 190-208

Rise in the Political Thermometre—The Boycott of the Simon Commission—All Parties Conference—

III.	The Calcutta Congress of 1928 —The Labour Government—Lahore Congress Session—Civil Disobedience Movement (1930)—The Dandi March—Civil Disobedience—The Simon Report and after.		
	XII. THE FATEFUL YEARS (1931-38)	...	209-22
IV.	Sapru—Jayakar Negotiations—The First R. T. C. Release of Gandhi Ji—Gandhi-Irwin Pact—Karachi Congress Session—25th April 1931—The Second R. T. C.—Civil Disobedience and Tory Terrorism (1932-34)—MacDonald Award and Poona Pact—withdrawal of the Movement—Reactions—Parliamentarism (1935-38).		
	XIII. INDIA AND WORLD WAR II (1939-45)	...	227-24
	The Election Controversy—The Congress stand in regard to World War II—The Cripps' Mission—The August Movement and after—The Congress and the Axis Powers—Subhas and the I. N. A.		
	XIV. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS (1945-47)	...	242-255
EXT	The Simla Conference—The Labour Government—Cabinet Delegation—Muslim League's Direct Action—London Conference—Transfer of Power—The British decision to quit.		
V.			
	XV. PAKISTAN A REALITY	...	256-275
	Development of Muslim Politics, 1924-38—Two Nation Theory—Pakistan A Reality.		
	XVI. GANDHI AND GANDHISM	...	276-289
VI.	Life—Work as a Leader of the Nationalist Struggle—Work as a Nation-BUILDER—Criticism—The Gandhian School of Thought—Non-Violence: The Law of Progress—Meaning of Non-Violence—Application of Non-Violence to Politics—Estimate.		
	BIBLIOGRAPHY		
	INDEX,		

GENERAL

OBSERVATIONS ON INDIAN NATIONALISM AND THE CHARACTER AND INFLUENCES OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION.

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"There is indeed no greater curse to a nation than a nationalist movement.....Conquered nations lose their place in the World's march because they can do nothing but strive to get rid of their national movements by recovering their national liberty."

—Bernard Shaw quoted in Jawaharlal's Autobiography.

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"The Indian Revolution is the first entirely above-ground revolution in history, that has undeviatingly followed a policy of using wholly honourable means to achieve its ends—a revolution in which the means were held to be as important as the end—a revolution without hate, without terror, without a spy system, without treachery, without assassination—a revolution in which all the habitual evils of revolution were ruled out."

—Francis Gunthor: *Revolution in India.*

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"The revolution which has been wrought by English influences and civilization will always constitute the most abiding monument of British rule."

—Sir Henry Cotton: *New India.*

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III.

IV.

EXI

V.

VI.

INTRODUCTORY

Rise of Indian Nationalism—The Congress and the Nationalist Movement—The Revolt of 1857—Character of the National Movement—The Stages of Struggle or development of the movement—The Constitutional period—The Extremist period—the period of mass movements and Constructive nationalism,

RISE OF INDIAN NATIONALISM :—

India is a vast breeding-ground of humanity. It is almost a continent covering an area of about two million square miles equal to that of Europe excluding Russia. Foreigners have spoken about the country as a big museum of diverse nationalities. They take its people for the inmates of some botanical garden. Most of them go to the extent of suggesting that there is nothing like an India, nothing like an Indian people, or an Indian nation. There is some truth in such observations. A nation in the perfect sense does not exist in India and probably exists nowhere in this world. Homogeneity is not acceptable to Nature which man has not yet completely overpowered. About India it is, however, not difficult to assert that it has been 'one,' not merely in a geographical sense, but in many respects for thousands of years. Religion has been the bed-rock of Indian unity ever since the early Vedic Rishis sang their hymns in the beautiful plains of Aryavarta. It is also true that India could not evolve a nationalist consciousness, in the true sense, in the period before the British rule. It was hardly possible in the self-sufficient, feudal, medieval environment. Nationalism means a common political consciousness or patriotism which the people of a country must share among themselves. It is a modern phenomenon. It represents the consciousness of society at an advanced stage of material development. It also implies an integrated political system, economy and exchange, on the country-wide basis. India acquired this consciousness with the growth of her society on modern lines and with the unity of her political and economic life achieved as an indirect consequence of foreign rule in the 19th century. Resentment against colonial rule sharpened this consciousness and gave birth to nationalist agitation.

III. THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS:—

It is usually said that the history of the Indian National Congress is the history of Indian Nationalism. It is not exactly so. The nationalist movement began to shape itself earlier than the foundation of the Congress in 1885. Moreover, the nationalist movement was more comprehensive than the Congress movement.

- IV. The Congress movement has, more or less, throughout acted as a safety-valve and, strictly speaking, it never allowed agitation to develop beyond safety-limits. It did not patronise revolutionary technique and even sympathise with the aspirations of the fiery exponents of nationalism. The nationalist history, on the other hand, cannot afford to ignore them. Their activity forms a current of the broad national movement. The moderate elements of Indian nationalism, who severed their connection with the Congress on the issue of the Montford Reforms, were likewise a part of the nationalist movement. They did not sympathise with the tumult of later politics and did not believe in accepting a technique of struggle on which they could not firmly act. But they were sincere patriots and laboured for the good of the country in their own way. It is, however, true that the Congress movement was the most organised and formidable expression of nationalist opinion and sentiment. Its history naturally forms a very substantial part of the history of Indian nationalism.

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THE SEPOY REBELLION 1857: According to some writers the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, too, was a national movement. Indian nationalism in the past also encouraged this notion, that it was:

- "national as well as political. The underlying causes and contributory forces were many. The union of the organisation which preceded the mutiny, the stubbornness with which the mutineers fought, and comparatively few treacheries that characterized the mutinous campaigns, all point to the same conclusion".¹*

VI

The revolt was undoubtedly a heroic effort at liberation sponsored by the dispossessed feudal aristocracy. But it lacked the sustaining inspiration of nationalism. The leaders of the revolt were hardly conscious of it and had divergent political aims.

The Muslims aimed at the restoration of the decadent Mughal dynasty and the Hindus fought for their fallen knights. The revolt was also a reaction of Hindu-Muslim orthodoxy against the modern spirit of progress. It was "much a revolt against the new order of things without having any consolidated ideas about the general national unity of India".² It was, however, necessary, very necessary indeed. The torments and turmoil of the Mutiny weakened to a great extent the reactionary forces of obscurantism and orthodoxy and helped the transition of India from medievalism to modernism. The old nobility connected with feudal interests declined fast and became almost a useless part of society. Town-life now became the cluster of the modern middle-class which probably had a bad conscience but certainly had an enlightened mind. The mutiny heralded the heroic age of the bourgeoisie in India. The Indian stage was now dominated by the 'Babus' and the business-men. The modern politician personified the manufacturer and the business-man with a sure instinct for gain, the ambitious English educated towns-man counting his status in terms of his income and casting longing looks on the council-chambers, the disgruntled petty bourgeois, the clerk, the school-master, the petty shop-keeper etc., always out of tune with his environment and looking on politics as the path to salvation. The age of rationalism in politics dawned upon India and patriotism also became an arithmetic of political calculations. It ceased to be a high-souled adventure leading nowhere. It was now an organised political movement, slowly developing, gathering momentum in the course of development and ultimately imbibing the characteristics of a mass movement. It was not the creation of an individual but a resultant of various forces and influences.

CHARACTER OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT :—

The nationalist movement of the later period was an enlightened political movement. It was, to a large extent, a manifestation of the new progressive spirit which Indian society developed under the impact of Western civilisation. In the opinion of Dadabhai Naoroji, it was the product of enlightenment created by Western ideas and that the Congress represented "the aristocracy of intel-

III. lect." ³ In his Presidential address to the Congress at Calcutta in 1886, he said :

IV. *"That we understand the benefits English rule has conferred upon us ; that we thoroughly appreciate the education that has been given to us, the new light which has been poured upon us, turning us from darkness into light and teaching us the new lesson that kings are made for the people, not peoples for their kings ; and this new lesson we have learned amidst the darkness of Asiatic despotism only by the light of free English Civilization".*⁴

Indian nationalism was inspired by the idealism of the French Revolution and the example of national agitations for democratic government in Europe in the 19th century. Its watch-words were national unity and national progress. It worked for the political interests of the Indian people as a whole. It did not identify itself with any class or creed but represented the aspirations of the Indian nation. It worked on the assumption that the people of India, inspite of their marked local and linguistic differences, constitute a family and have identical national interests. Its aim was the establishment of democratic government, the heritage of the modern civilized world.

V In some respects, the national movement was also a revivalist movement. Indian nationality, says Annie Besant, is "not a plant of mushroom growth but a giant of the forest with millennia behind it."⁵ Nationalism feeds on past memories and achievements. It was more so in the case of India, which is immensely rich in the wealth of historic traditions. Pricked by imperialist repression, its national self-consciousness began to seek inspiration from the past. The religious movement of the 19th century also aroused the nation to a realization of its greatness in the past and the possibilities of progress in future. Its revivalist doctrines exercised strong spell on the political imagination of the country and worked up a tremendous sentiment of patriotism.

VI The revivalist outlook of Indian nationalism proved an effective antidote to the slavish mentality bred by foreign rule. It deprecated the craze for the superficial glamour of the West. It

3. Annie Besant : How India Wrought for Freedom p. 164.

4. Speeches and Writings p. 4.

5. How India Wrought for Freedom.

strengthened the moral fibre of the nation to resist the onflood of European manners and morality. The awakening of India, observes Pandit Nehru was two-fold : "She looked to the West and, at the same time, she looked at herself and her own past."⁶ The interaction of modernist and revivalist influences made Indian nationalism a complex phenomenon. At a later stage it became a curious blending of religion and politics, materialism and spiritualism. Revivalism also created complications in the struggle for freedom. In reviving the past India revived the old forgotten communal memories and loyalties also and the result was encouragement to disruptive tendencies. Revivalism, in fact, is a phenomenon of illness and a society which is uncritical in its worship of the past and is constantly looking backwards is an organism with little vitality. An army on the march which is to be constantly fed from the rear will certainly give a poor account of itself.

The Indian national movement was also in a sense a unique liberation struggle. We may say that history affords no other example of a similar movement of freedom conducted in such an organised and on the whole non-violent manner. There is, however, nothing odd about it. The nationalist movement was not a 'war' of liberation. It began as a movement for political concessions and reforms from the British Government, and it retained a compromising attitude towards the government throughout its history. In the Gandhian period of mass upheavals also it never aimed at snapping the British connection altogether. Moreover non-violence was considered as the only safe and sound strategy for a defenceless and divided people against the military machine of the Britisher. It found favour with the people who had lived and languished under feudal servitude and had been drilled into slavery at the point of bayonets. It appealed to India—the patient East, "sublime in its resignation and charity." Only an insignificant section of the nationalists questioned the philosophy underlying the movement—the philosophy of suffering and sacrifice for a noble cause. The British policies of conciliation and counterpoise also arrested the growth of a dynamic revolutionary sentiment. And when towards the end of the second

III

World War, the mood of India was rebellious, the British had the wisdom to read the bleak prospect of the future and quit.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT :—

IV

The history of Indian nationalism suggests three well-marked phases of development. The first is the period of the ascendancy of liberalism lasting till the stormy regime of Lord Curzon. This period witnessed the growth of nationalist agitation on constitutional lines. During the Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton (1876-80), we observe the first stirrings of the nationalist consciousness.

The Ilbert Bill controversies in the period of Lord Ripon (1880-84), further irritated it and stimulated the nationalist agitation. With the organisation of the Congress in 1885 nationalist agitation took a weighty form. There is sharp difference of opinion regarding the utility of the Congress movement in the early phase. The accounts of the Congressites of the later period dismiss the Congress in the early phase as a motionless caravan of Anglicised propagandists and politicians or a lifeless pageant of superficial patriotism. This is a harsh judgment. The Congress began with

EX

modest ideals and was perfectly true to them. It cultivated politics in the wider aspect as the fundamental basis of national

V

progress. It became the embodiment of the nationalist spirit and was guided by lofty aims of national advancement. It succeeded in building up healthy public life and sturdy national character. The British bureaucrats ridiculed it as a fantastic body of dreaming idealists and impotent seditionists. But its platform seduced the refined intellect of every community. In the Congress India found her voice, and as Annie Besant remarks, through it she was realising herself as a nation :

VI

"Strange and menacing was the portent in the eyes of some. Splendid and full of hope in the eyes of others. The rosy fingers of the Dawn-Maidens had touched the Indian skies. When would her Sun of Freedom rise to irradiate the Motherland".⁷

Political agitation in the first phase lacked vigour and effectiveness and was exclusively an upper middle-class agitation. But it was an intellectual feat *par-excellence* and supplied intellectual foundations to Indian nationalism. The evolution of

nationalism in this phase was accompanied by the assimilation of Western thought and even mode of life by the upper educated strata of society. The spirit of nationalism was especially marked in Bengal, Bombay and Madras provinces where this process had started earlier and struck deeper root.

In the second phase, (1900—1919)—Indian nationalism acquired more dynamic and threatening character. It evolved the school of self-reliance—of passive resistance and vigorous agitation, and that of violent retaliation also. There was reaction against Westernisation, which was intensified by economic factors. The basis of nationalist agitation widened with the inclusion of the lower middle-class representing small-propertied interests. The reactionary policies of the government imparted vigour to the spirit of agitation. The Swadeshi and Boycott movements, following the partition of Bengal in July 1905, produced a tremendous convulsion of patriotic spirit. Revolutionary methods also came into play. Gods and goddesses were invoked to free the country from the tyranny of the white race. Swadeshi and Swaraj, the war-cries of the extremists scared away the moderates and caused a split in the Congress movement. The British government, however, succeeded in weakening the nationalist aspiration for radical political reforms. Its policy of conciliation, the Minto-Morley Reforms, created a breach in the solidarity of Indian nationalism and won over the Muslim intelligentsia. The storm of the extremist agitation subsided to a great extent in the time of Lord Hardinge and there was reconciliation in all directions. The annulment of the Partition soothed much of the bitterness of public feeling and the drift of international affairs drew the Muslims to the nationalist camp. The war, which broke out in 1914, intensified the constitutional movement. There was agitation for self-government of the colonial pattern. The Congress and the League also formulated a joint scheme of reforms in 1916 and pressed the British government to accept it. The government could not completely ignore it particularly because India exercised a decisive influence on the fortunes of the Empire during the war. In 1917, the British Government defined its policy as "the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms marked the beginning of the first stage of this policy.

In the final phase, the Gandhian epoch, (1920-1947)—Indian nationalism acquired greater vitality and adaptability. It freed itself of the emotional aberrations of the preceeding phase and comprehended the economic and political implications of the struggle fully. The national struggle also acquired all the features of a national movement. The Gandhi-cult not only elevated politics to a high moral plane but brought the classes and the masses together in a common line of political thought and action. The World War I turned the scales against liberalism for ever and prepared the ground for the bloodless victories of Gandhism. Mahatma Gandhi was a product of the awakening and disillusionment caused by it. The failure of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in conciliating fully the nationalist opinion finished constitutionalism inside the Congress. The Congress now prepared itself to experience ordeal by suffering and the merchant and the masses joined it. The bright intellectuals of the age were not impressed by Mahatma Gandhi and looked upon him as an inspired eccentricity. The British government set him down as a dangerous revolutionary and persecuted him. The nation, however, grasped him as the supreme physician of the hour. He appeared to preach a new religion of patriotism which had fire in it and was also amusing. He spoke like a prophet of hope and took upon his head the sorrows and sufferings of the Indian humanity. Non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience were not the innovations of his brain. They were known to India and also to the world outside. He put more meaning and life into them or took whatever meaning and life they had by associating them with his own laboratory of soul-force and inner-voice. To be more precise, Indian nationalism under his guidance perfected the technique of boycott and passive resistance. If the nation could act on it, it could develop into a national strike against Imperialism. Nothing positive came out of the non-co-operation movement of 1920-21, launched for the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs. The Mahatma promised Swaraj within a year and also outlined a scheme of civil disobedience. But the nation did not fulfil the hard test of non-violence and he cancelled his programme. The movement was, however, the beginning of mass upheavals in Indian politics and was the first experiment in the political education of the people. It came at the right moment and rescued the nation from a feeling of

helplessness and despair. It left the middle-class intellectuals in the Congress with a chastened fervour, a clearer vision, with a feeling of relief something similar to that after a delightful summer-bath. They now tried non-cooperation inside the Council-Chambers to wreck the Constitution, particularly the odious dyarchy. This experiment is known as the Swarajist revolt inside the Congress. C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Vithalbhai Patel and Hakim Ajmal Khan with their following took part in the elections towards the close of 1923. By 1928 the Swarajist front began to crack and the appointment of Simon Commission brightened up political life. The Congress held parleys with other political organisations and produced a brilliant document of free Indian dominion. But this time the Hindu-Muslim lute was rather badly damaged. Its discordant and jarring notes were a relief to Imperialism which turned down the national demand. The Congress ultimately came out with a declaration of war at the historic Lahore Session of 1929. The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-34 advanced the cause of freedom further and revealed the intensity of anti-British feeling among the masses. The British government dealt-with it by putting its entire machinery of terror into motion. It also promised a review of the constitutional position and organised the Round Table conference at London. It succeeded, and even forced the Mahatma to come down from the high pedestal of roaring patriotism and accept an honourable truce. With the Gandhi-Irwin truce of 1930 set in the decline of the Gandhian leadership. In the later period, it was accepted with grave misgivings and questionings by those who were capable of rational thinking inside the Congress. The Congress, however, continued under the dominance of the Old Guard or the Rightists who swallowed the bait of Provincial Autonomy. This almost completed the demoralisation of the nationalist front. In the later period Muslim communalism progressed like a torrent. The Muslim League was fast becoming a crusading army and had full blessings of the third party. The political transactions of this period make an unpleasant reading. The August movement of 1942 was the last challenge of Indian nationalism to Imperialism, which did not appear like relaxing its control over the country. After the second World War, the British found it difficult and rather unsafe to hold India under subjection. Their decision

to recognise India's demand of freedom speaks highly of their political farsightedness. It is, however, doubtful whether India's acceptance of freedom as an award has been a blessing to her. The partition was certainly not to the taste of Mahatma Gandhi. He trembled at the very thought of it. "*But to-day I am a lone voice in India*", he complained early in 1947, and that "*I have lost all desire to live long*". He then asked the British to leave early and leave India either to chaos or anarchy and he hoped :

"Even if the whole of India is in flames, it will not bring Pakistan"

He would not accept it and wanted India to "go through fire, no doubt, but that fire would purify us." With the Partition came to an end the Gandhian phase of the national movement.

Throughout these phases, the national movement made a steady progress. It ultimately came to cover every sphere of national activity and touch every spring of national life. The scope of the movement widened as it grew in strength and organisation. In the later period the Congress became the pivot of all public movements of industrial and social progress. It engaged itself in constructive work to improve the social and economic condition of the masses. Under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi the national movement received new light and inspiration and became a comprehensive movement of national renaissance and reconstruction.

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF INDIAN NATIONALISM.

Progress of British Rule—Novelty of British Rule—The Mutiny and its significance—Reactionary Role of British Administration—Revolutionary Role of British Administration—The Reform Movement—Conclusion.

PROGRESS OF BRITISH RULE :—

The eighteenth century was a turning point in Indian history. The decline of the Mughal kingship after the death of Aurangzeb led to the dissolution of the old political order. The growth of independent despotisms and their struggle for power prepared a wholesome ground for the political success of foreigners. European commerce now emerged as an armed institution. The national rivalries on the European continent also exercised a vicious influence on Indian politics and the India trade became an object of fierce contention. The English and the French, which were the two strong nations of the period, tried to eliminate each other from India. They boldly interfered in internal politics and planned their ascendancy. The Anglo-French Wars throughout 1740—63 were prompted by deep colonial ambitions. With their easy possession of Bengal after the battle of Plassey in 1756, it was not difficult for the English to knock the French out. The defeat of the Marathas at Panipat in 1761 by Ahmad Shah Abdali made their position quite secure in the country. Before the curtain dropped on the century, they were virtually the paramount power. With the annexation of the Punjab in 1849 the entire country was coloured red.

The conquest of India by some European nation in the 18th century was inevitable. The European was the representative of a dynamic growing society. He was bound to come off with flying colours against the decadent feudal civilizations of Asia. India had the misfortune of being governed by an unenlightened morally degraded feudal nobility. In the 18th century, it multiplied like mushrooms and society could not grow and prosper. The British policies of conquest and consolidation also reveal a superior political intelligence and capacity which were beyond

the understanding of the Indian ruling class. The priest was the other devil of society. Foreigners speak about the Hindu priest in particular as crafty and wicked. It would be more accurate to describe him as the embodiment of the follies and superstitions of society. The priestly community was a citadel of reaction. It flourished as a strong parasitical class in an atmosphere of ignorance and religiosity. The accounts of the period suggest that Indian society under its influence was a highly rigid and unprogressive organism.

NOVELTY OF BRITISH RULE :—

The British government in India, said Macaulay, was a state "which resembles no other in history and forms by itself a separate class of political phenomenon."¹ It was undoubtedly a novel phenomenon and India knew nothing like it in her history before. It put into power a class which lived far away from her soil and did not govern her in her own interests. Under it India soon felt that she had not only been conquered but also enslaved. The British rule destroyed much that was valuable and precious in her life. The destruction of her age-old industries and the dissipation of her talents under foreign rule worked incalculable havoc on her life. The result was that she was hostile to the new masters. There were various revolts and insurrections but they had no potency of effective resistance. The intensity of hostility varied in different parts as the British conquest was a prolonged process. The various parts of the country fell under it at different periods.

MUTINY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE :—

During the revolt of 1857, some of the Indian leaders made a heroic effort at throwing off the shackles of bondage. In the heart of Northern India the revolt took the shape of a formidable popular rising. It, however, failed in driving the Britisher out. A large part of the country, almost three-fourth of it, remained quiet. Most of the ruling chiefs were indifferent to it and some even actively supported the foreigner. The Sikhs, who had lost their homeland to the Britisher just a few years before, now supported him with all the zeal of fanatics. They looked upon the people outside the Punjab as their enemy. Were these not the

1. Compland, R. : The Indian Problem, part I. p. 19.

non-Sikhs in the Company's army who had fought against them and defeated them? India obviously was not politically awake and possessed no nationalist consciousness. It is possible, that had not the Indian troops in the Company's army raised the standard of rebellion, there may have been nothing like it. The conduct of the Indian soldier was inspired more by dread of military discipline and missionary propaganda than by love of his country.

The Mutiny has no direct bearing on the nationalist movement. It was, none the less, a significant episode in the history of Indo-British connection. It exercised formative influence on the evolution of nationalist thought. The Indian mind now grasped the need of compromise with Western institutions and trends of thought. It applied itself to organised political agitation on nationalist lines. When its old ammunition had misfired in the act of resisting the new masters India learnt to beat them back with their own weapons. These were the weapons of modern progress and nationalism.

The thunder of the Mutiny was also the first terrific shock to the Britisher. He was compelled to revise the old policies of annexation and exclusion of Indians from the chambers of the Empire. The Parliament took over the territories of the East India Company under its direct control. The purely colonial character of British rule was also modified in the post-Mutiny period. The British Government now held bright hopes to the princes and people. In her proclamation of 1858, Queen Victoria solemnly assured the former² that

"We desire no extension of our present territorial possessions.....We shall respect the rights, the dignity, and honour of Native Princes as our own....."

To the people she promised the blessings of good government, freedom of belief and worship, rights to public service, impartial protection of law etc. The Proclamation was hailed by educated Indians as a historic pronouncement and as the Magna Charta of their rights.² An attempt was also made in the direction of

2. See R. Dutt : The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age pp. 232-35. He writes that he heard the Proclamation in his boyhood, being read in one of the district towns of Bengal. Both Hindus and Muslims hailed it with shouts of joy, "and Brahmans held up their sacred threads and exclaimed Maharani Dirghajibi Haun—May the Great Queen live long."

Footnote p. 232.

associating non-official element with public administration. The Act of 1861 enlarged the Legislative Councils of the Bombay and Madras Presidencies and created similar ones for Bengal, the United Provinces and the Punjab. At least half of the new members were to be chosen from outside the ranks of the Civil Service. This was certainly a departure from the old traditions.

The British government recognised the principle of representation and acted on it by associating Indians with the work of law-making, first in the Provinces and then at the Centre. It was inclined to heed the warnings of loyalist Indians and take care to correct the impression that it was "as slow poison, a rope of sand, a treacherous flame of fire".³ It was Sir Syed Ahmad who first argued at length that the Mutiny was the result of the non-admission of Indians to the Legislative Councils. This omission, he said, was a hindrance to the development of good feelings between the rulers and the ruled and kept the government altogether out of touch with the Indian opinion. He wrote :

*"It is from the voice of the people only that Government can learn whether its project are likely to be well-received. The voice of the people alone can check errors in the bud and warn us of dangers before the burst upon, and destroy us".*⁴

The formation of a "Parliament from the natives", he considered, impossible and useless but the government must understand "the inadvisability of the laws and regulations which it passed".⁵

The Mutiny, however, failed to solve the Indian problem. The racial and reactionary policies of the government explain the conflict between India and England in the later period and they contributed to the growth of political agitation.

REACTIONARY ROLE OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION:—

Racial Bitterness : India as a Crown Colony did not feel less humiliated and embittered than before. The bureaucracy was now more swollen-headed and defiant and the Imperialist system more ruthless and perfect. The mutiny also left behind a tradition of suspicion and bitterness on both sides. The racial gulf between the rulers and the ruled continued widening. The

3. Causes of the Indian Revolt p. 14

4. Ibid pp. 11-12

5. Ibid p. 13.

Britisher had always a feeling of contempt for the Indians but the mutiny changed this feeling into one of "active hatred".⁶ The middle-class youth of England now entered his Indian career with violent prejudices against Indian people. He looked upon them with contempt "as the creatures half-gorilla, half-negro, who appeared in the contemporary Punch cartoons".⁷ In any case, he did not consider them any better than "a parcel of black-heathen bodies and natives.....worshipping stocks and stones, and swinging themselves upon bamboos like peasts".⁸ Indians of even approved merit and high station were not allowed access to the European clubs and were treated arrogantly by White Sahibs. Till the nineties of last century, travelling in the upper class railway compartments too was not safe for them. We are informed that even the ruling chiefs, while travelling in the upper classes, were bullied into unlacing the boots and shampooing the weary legs of the Sahibs just back from hunting excursions.⁹ Assaults on Indians by Europeans were also a frequent occurrence and as they were tried by English Jury, they were often left completely unpunished. The administration of criminal justice in this respect was a "judicial scandal", and it was a "grave symptom" that both the official and non-official sections of the European community were swayed by racial passions and anti-Indian prejudices.¹⁰ There was consequently,

"The long succession of murders and brutalities perpetrated by Englishmen upon Indians which either went unpunished or for which, at the demand of the whole European community, only a small penalty was exacted. This scandal of which there were many flagrant instances in the sixties, has continued till recent times".¹¹

In 1890 Sir Theodore Morisson, a member of the Indian Civil Service, wrote that "it is an ugly fact which it is no use to disguise that the murder of the natives by Englishmen is no infrequent occurrence".¹² Maddened by the new consciousness of power,

6. Garrat, G.T : An Indian Commentary p. 93.

7. Ibid pp. 114-115.

8. Cotton, H : New India pp. 46-47.

9. Ibid pp. 69-70

10. Ibid pp. 57-61

11. Garrat . An Indian Commentary pp. 116-117

12. Op. Cited Ibid,

the bureaucracy grew more irresponsible and autocratic. Its conduct towards its subjects was, to a great extent, guided by certain maxims which deserve mention :

"The first was that the life of one European was worth those of many Indians. The second was that the only thing that an oriental understands was fear. The third was that England had been forced to lose many lives and spend many millions to hold India, and did she not merit some more substantial recompense than the privilege of governing India in a spirit of wisdom and unselfishness".¹³

Racial bitterness between the rulers and the ruled was at bottom of much of the hostility towards the Britisher in India in the post-Mutiny period. It prevented their full reconciliation and India could not unreservedly trust the British character and pledges. Edward Thompson states the bare truth when he observes :

"Right at the back of the mind of many an Indian the Mutiny flits as he talks with an Englishman—an unavenged and unappeased ghost".¹⁴

ECONOMIC DISCONTENT :

Economic discontent breeds agitation and under foreign rule India suffered from glaring economic injustice and evils which sucked her very life-blood. Annie Besant enumerates the following causes of unrest and it is easy to add many more :

(1) British Rule paid no regard to Indian local customs and talent, and was a hybrid system of Boards and Councils in whose management Indian opinion was ineffective. (2) British rule promoted illiteracy, (3) neglected irrigation, (4) neglected sanitation, (5) destroyed India's fine arts and industries, (6) and was extremely costly and responsible for huge drain on national wealth. (7) British rule was based on coercion, denied civil liberties. India was enthralled and she wanted to be free.¹⁵

We shall briefly touch the salient features of the reactionary aspect of foreign rule which gave birth to agitation.

13. Ibid p. 116.

14. The Other Side of the Medal p. 30.

15. Annie Besant : How India wrought for Freedom pp. I.VI—I.IX.

Discouragement to Indian Talent—Gopal Krishna Gokhale, an eminent nationalist of the early phase, was of opinion that British rule was destroying India's capacity for initiative and dwarfing its people as men of action.¹⁶ The educated people of India felt as they were, to use the words of Surendranath Banerjea, another prominent worker, "the helots of the land, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water", existing for the gods of bureaucracy.¹⁷ All positions of trust and responsibility were monopolised by Englishmen. The British authorities on the spot treated with contempt the Royal pledges to the people for free admission to the higher services on the basis of merit. Lord Lytton unhesitatingly confessed that the pledges were never intended to be carried out. In a confidential document he wrote :

*"We all know that these claims and expectations never can or will be fulfilled. We have had to choose between prohibiting them (Indians) and cheating them, and we have chosen the least straightforward course",*¹⁸

This state of affairs was intolerable to the intelligentsia which aspired to have full voice in the councils of the nation. The cry of Indianisation of the services was the starting point of political agitation.

Discouragement to Industry—The British rule was also detrimental to the industrial progress of the country. The fiscal policy of the Indian government was dictated by British capitalists who viewed with alarm the prospect of the growth of Indian industry. The free-trade policy of the government making India a vast sea-port open to the commerce of the world stood in the way of her industrial regeneration. The rapid rise of Japan since 1868 as a great industrial country created great impression in India and was attributed to her independent condition. The Indian bourgeoisie naturally took active interest in the national agitation and nationalist leaders made effective protests against the economic policies of British Imperialism. The swadeshi and boycott movements were the concrete manifestations of these protests. As early as 1891, Lala Murlidhar of the Punjab spoke passionately in the Urdu language against the use of foreign stuffs at the Congress session :

16 Ibid p. 421.

17. Ibid p 174

18 Ibid p, 420

"What are all these chandeliers and lamps, and European made chairs and tables, and smart clothes and hats, and English coats and bonnets and frocks, and silver mounted canes, and all the luxurious fittings of your houses, but trophies of India's misery, mementoes of India's starvation".

And further :

*"Free trade, fair play between nations, how I hate the sham,
What fair-play in trade can there be between impover-
ished India and the bloated capitalist England".*¹⁹

Poverty of the Masses : The crux of India's economic problem was the poverty of her people. At the second Congress, D. E. Wacha, known as the Indian Fawcett for his deep knowledge of financial questions, pointed out how the condition of the peasantry had deteriorated further since 1848. Forty millions of people, he said, had to be content with one meal a day. He attributed the poverty of India to the tribute exacted by Great Britain from the starving peasantry and "exported to fructify there, and swell still further the unparalleled wealth of these distant isles".²⁰ The statements of responsible British officials corroborate the truth of his statement. In 1880, Sir William Hunter said :

"There remain forty millions of Indians who go through life on insufficient food".²¹

1 About the Punjab also the Revenue Commissioner reported
t in 1891 that atleast half of the old agriculturists were ruined beyond
t redemption. Their farms had passed under money-lenders whom
t the British system made masters of the agricultural community.
w The heavy assessment of land-revenue was the primary cause of
r peasant indebtedness and misery.²² Lord Salisbury, the high-
s priest of Toryism, as Secretary of State confessed in 1875 that
w British rule was bleeding India white. In the opinion of W. T.
w Thornton, who wrote in 1880, the annual tribute to England "tapped
w India's very heart-blood and has dried up the mainsprings of her
li industrial position".²³ About the beginning of the 20th century,

19 Ibid pp. 126-127

20. Ibid p. 19

21. Fisher, F B . India's Silent Revolution. pp. 37-38

22. Ibid

23. Annie Besant : *India a Nation* pp. 98-99

William Digby of the civil service estimated that there were seventy millions hungry people in British India²⁴. It is not difficult to cite authentic evidence in support of the intensity of suffering under foreign rule. A government run exclusively in the interests of merchants and capitalists is a machinery of greed and exploitation and India felt the full weight of it.

REVOLUTIONARY ROLE OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION :—

In many respects the British rule was also a revolutionary experiment. With its foundation the medieval ages of India ended and her modern age began. It brought about a change, slow and imperceptible, in every phase of national life. In the process of consolidating his authority the Britisher released forces which made nationalism a reality. Aided by science, the foreign government was a highly centralised experiment. It brought people under common rule of law, united them in a single political system and created conditions for the rise of nationalism. It was instrumental in awakening a consciousness of unity at political level among the diverse strands of Indian life. Moreover, the British rule was imbued with strong consciousness of colour and nationality. E. H. Carr rightly stresses that it provided the people "common interests and common grievances", and had "its customary effect in stimulating a similar consciousness among the subjects".²⁵

Social Transformation.—The British rule worked towards the gradual transformation of the old unprogressive feudal social order and the evolution of new society pulsating with fresh life and energy. The Imperialist policies effected a redistribution of the old social arrangements and helped the growth of the modern economic groups with sharp class consciousness. The administrative unification of India also promoted the growth and organisation of trade, business, exchange, insurance, banking, industry and allied transactions on a national basis and contributed to the solidarity of the nationalist sentiment.²⁶ Of the new classes, the middle-class intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie deserve mention. The former was organised earlier with the growth of modern literary and technical education. It was a strong class of technicians

24. Ibid.

25. Nationalism p. 153.

26. See Dr. Desai's Social Background of Indian Nationalism.

and professionals, of lawyers, educationists, journalists, physicians etc. With the expansion of education in the post-Mutiny period, this class rapidly grew in strength. Its members became "more and more the rivals of Englishmen, and especially of the official class, who stand between them and the prizes of their ambition." The masses looked to them "as their natural and best representatives."²⁷ Foreign rule denied full outlet to its energies and it put itself in the van of political agitation. The bourgeoisie was drawn from the old middle-class traders and bankers. With the expansion of foreign trade, they accumulated sufficient capital reserves to start independent industrial enterprises on modern lines. By the close of the 19th century, they constituted an energetic, well organised section of society. They were not ~~happy~~ in their role as middle-men of foreign capitalism. They interested themselves in agitation to eliminate foreign monopoly of trade and industry. The formation of these classes pulled society out of the medieval rut and ensured her development on modern lines. The nationalist movement remained under the direction of these classes.

Western Influences.—The Western influences which began to beat on Indian life in the 19th century had a regenerating effect on society. Of these, the introduction of English as the State-language proved the most beneficial measure. It exercised far-reaching influence on the evolution of nationalist thought. The much-maligned Macaulay, the first Law-Member, under the Act of 1833, responsible for declaring English as the State language, was conscious of the revolutionary potentialities of his experiment. He looked forward with pride to the day, the "proudest day in England's history, when Indians having become instructed in European knowledge, they may in some future age demand European Institutions".²⁸ Indian nationalism to a very great extent is the foster-child of Western education. With it the frontiers of knowledge expanded. It gave practical and rationalistic turn to the mystic and speculative bent of the Indian mind. It was "the invisible, non-material high-way between India and the West, just as steamships, cables and aircraft form the visible, material high-way."²⁹ The intelligentsia created by Western education

27. Cotton . New India p. 29.

28 Cited in Holland, W. E. S. . The Indian Outlook p. 35.

29. Coatman, J. : Years of Destiny-India 1926-32, p. 57.

admired and assimilated the spirit of European progress and the trends of European thought. The teachings of radical thinkers like Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire, Mill, Spencer made deep impression on the educated people and corrected their uncritical deference for law, authority, customs and dogmas. The great contribution of the West to Indian National Movement, truly observes Ramsay MacDonald, was its theory of political liberty. He writes :

"Mr Herbert Spencer's individualism and Lord Morley's liberalism are, as it were, the only battery of guns which India has captured from us, and condescends to use against us".³⁰

In the opinion of Sir Ashutosh Mukerjee, the eminent educationist of Bengal, the English language "is the language of freedom." He was not prepared to deprive his young men of it and flatly rejected the plea of a member of the Calcutta University Commission (1917-19) for imparting education in the mother-tongue.³¹ Indian political ideals have certainly been borrowed from England and through English education. It was an inspiration to the intellectuals of the Victorian age to see that England, the fortress of democracy, was the refuge of European patriots and thinkers driven out from their homelands. The political traditions of that island became the aspirations of the English educated Indians. The entire conception of law, government and public rights which now forms a part of the Indian democracy is of British inspiration. The products of Western education were the pioneers of almost all movements of social and political reform in modern India. The English language served as a common medium of expression and helped them to work on a common platform. In this connection the remarks of Sir Henry Cotton deserve to be quoted :

"We have done much more under our rule than was ever attempted by our predecessors to make a nationality possible..... It is education, and education according to English methods and on the lines of Western Civilization, that has served to unite the varying forces among the Indian populations. No other bond of unity was possible ; the confusion of tongues was an insuperable obstacle".³²

30. Awakening of India pp. 124-125.

31. Cited in Coatman : Years of Destiny p. 58.

32. New India pp. 2-3.

The language of Shakespeare and Milton became the common channel, through which "the fire-worshippers of Bombay and the Baboos of Bengal" gave expression "to their common interests and aspirations".³³ Till the end of the 19th century Western education could not spread beyond the small upper class and some sections of the lower middle-classes. But its influence was sufficient to create a ferment in the domain of ideas and mould Indian political thought.

Besides education on modern lines the press was another valuable gift of Europe to India. The British capitalistic enterprise in jute mills and coal mines, which began about the middle of last century, also awakened India to the realities of modern life. The penetration of modern industry increased the weight of enlightened public opinion which worked for reforms in society. The humanitarian and educational work of the Christian missions, the reclamation of primitive and depressed tribes by them, too, worked in the same direction. In the blaze of Western influences India learned to discard the medieval cloak and her nationalism almost kept pace with the progress of her society on modern lines.

THE REFORM MOVEMENT :—

The contacts with the West and the menacing Christian propaganda vitalised social and religious life. The religious movement of the 19th century is a testimony to the awakening of Indian society. It realized the need of radical reforms if it was to develop on modern lines. The movement of Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772—1833) rescued Bengal "from the state of comma produced by the East India Company".³⁴ The Brahmo-Samaj, which he founded in 1828 was an enlightened sect incorporating the best elements of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. It has played a notable part as a reforming and uplifting agency. The first temple of this sect was inaugurated on Jan. 23, 1830 and was open to all for worship. Raja Ram was also a pioneer in the direction of social reforms on modern lines, "the herald of a new age".³⁵ Annie Besant calls him "that extra-ordinary spirit of fire and steel, whose heroic courage faced alone the

33. Ibid.

34. Annie Besant : India a Nation p. 92.

35. Macnicol, N : The Making of Modern India pp. 172-174.

dread and the unbroken force of Hindu Orthodoxy, and planted the seed of freedom, the seed destined to grow into a spreading tree, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nation",³⁶ In the time of Keshav Chandra Sen (1834-1884), who was a powerful preacher, the influence of the Samaj spread to other parts of India. He established the Ved Samaj at Madras in 1864 and Prarthana Samaj at Bombay in 1867. The latter counted as its members Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Sir R. G. Bhandarkar, Sir Narayana Chandravarkar, to whom the Presidency owes much in social and educational reform.

The second great movement, the Arya Samaj was a puritanical Hindu movement. Swami Dayanand Saraswati—(1824-1883) established the Arya Samaj at Bombay in 1875. Its virile doctrines found ready welcome in North-Western India. The Swami discovered the lost soul of Hinduism and made it a dynamic force in national life. He was the high-priest of Vedic revivalism and a vigorous advocate of social reforms. Hinduism, he said, is a universal religion open to mankind and deriving its inspiration from the Vedas, the spoken word of God and source of all knowledge. He cried aloud against the taboos and superstitions of caste and the decadence of Pauranic Hinduism. His teachings fostered pride in the country and its past. Romain Rolland calls him "a hero of the Iliad, or of the Gita, with the strength of a Hercules," who dealt hatchet-blows at Hindu orthodoxy. In his opinion, "never since Shankara had such a prophet of wisdom appeared".³⁷ According to Hans Kohn, the Arya Samaj movement was "at once a religious and national revival. It sought to bring new life to India and the Hindu race",³⁸ The Anglo-Indian officials regarded it as a political movement, "as a society which had some occult creed and pursues it wicked way under cloaks of deceit".³⁹ Persecution gave life and strength to the movement.

Much different in spirit was the movement deriving its inspiration from Ram Krishna Paramahansa (1834-1886), the saint of Dakshineshwara. His life shone like a beacon-light of pure Hindu faith across the darkness of ultra-modernism which had

36. Annie Besant : Ibid pp. 72-73

37. Parameswaran, C. Dayananda and the Indian Problem pp. 228-29

38. Kohn, H. History of Nationalism in the East p. 62

39. MacDonald : The Awakening of India pp. 35-36.

nearly enveloped the soul of Bengal. His disciple Swami Vivekanand, "more or less a spoiled child of a very respectable family of Calcutta and a dandy of the worst type" in his youth,⁴⁰ preached the message of his master. He was a strong revivalist force of the last quarter of the 19th century. He was the apostle of modern Vedantism and preached that the world is not a Maya or illusion but a stage in the evolution of mankind towards progress. At the Parliament of world religions held at Chicago in 1894 he stormed the imagination of all by his striking oratory. He pointed out that India is the spiritual teacher of mankind and that Hinduism is a scientific religion and not a tissue of errors and superstitions. On his return to India, attended by a devoted band of foreign disciples, he captured the heart of the youth. He impressed on his country-men that knowledge is useless unless it is realized through action and that Hinduism is a religion of action. His teachings were a powerful doze to Indian vanity. Their trend was that :

"Once more the world must be conquered by India. This is the dream of my life, and I wish that each one of you who hear me to-day should have the same dream in your minds, and stop not till you have realised the dream..... Up, India, and conquer the world with your spirituality".⁴¹

And further :

"We must go out, and we must conquer the world through our spirituality and philosophy. There is no other alternative, we must do it or die.....The only condition of national life, once more vigorous national life, is the conquest of world by Indian thought."

"Like Dayanand", writes Hans Kohn, "Vivekanand taught young India self-confidence and trust in her own strength".⁴²

The Theosophical movement also did much for the Indian renaissance. It was the work of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, a Russian lady and Henry Steele Olcott, an American military officer. They were drawn to India by the Arya Samaj movement. At the invitation of Swami Dayanand, they landed at Bombay on Feb. 17, 1879. They had, however, no intention of identifying

40. Dr. Roy, S.C. : The Story of My Times pp. 36-37.

41. Kohn, H : Nationalism in the East pp. 71-72.

42. Ibid.

themselves with a sectarian movement. The Theosophical society, which they founded at Adyar in Madras in 1882, was a brother-hood of all religions. The key-note of their propaganda was that religion alone can inspire nationality. Mrs. Annie Besant came to India in 1893 and joined the society. She embraced the Hindu faith and plunged herself headlong into the movement of national education. The Hindu Central College of Banaras founded in 1898 was her work. The Theosophical movement gave strength to Hindu revivalism and "certainly no Hindu has done so much to organise and consolidate the movement as Mrs. Annie Besant",⁴³

These movements played a progressive role in undermining the influence of obscurantist social elements. They worked for radical social reforms and were patriotic in their outlook. It is a significant feature of the 19th. century religious movement that its leaders did not solely confine themselves to religious propaganda. It must, however, be admitted that their revivalist fervour did not exercise very healthy influence on public life which could not continue on purely reformist and unsectarian lines.

Conclusion .--Indian nationalism was a part of the great intellectual and spiritual ferment, the upheaval in mind and spirit which began in Indian life under the impact of Western Civilization. The forces which revolutionised national life in the 19th century came in the trail of British conquest. The revolutionary features of British rule gave the Indian people a political individuality and the stamp of nationality. The reactionary tendencies of bureaucratic rule provided the necessary material for political agitation. The national movement was the inevitable result of the revolutionary and reactionary features of British rule.

PART I

THE PERIOD OF THE RISE AND GROWTH OF CONSTITUTIONAL AGITATION. (1875—1900).

"Reactionary rulers are often the creators of great public movements. They will no doubt deny the charge or repudiate the credit, but they certainly sow seeds which, in the fulness of time, ensure the enthronement of popular opinion and the triumph of popular causes.

Surendranath Banerjee A Nation in Making

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National movements everywhere begin moderately and inevitably become more extreme...A demand for freedom suppressed, has to be met later with compound interest

Jawaharlal Nehru The Unity of India

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"Now if the feeling of a common nationality began to exist there (India) only feebly if, without inspiring any active desire to drive out the foreigner, it only created a notion that it was shameful to assist him in maintaining his dominion—from that day, almost, our Empire would cease to exist,

Seeley The British historian quoted by C. F. Andrews in his—

'India and the Simon Report'

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CHAPTER II

THE SEED-TIME OF INDIAN NATIONALISM (1876—85)

Progress and Recovery after the Mutiny—the Early Public Associations—the Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton—the India Association—the Civil Service agitation—the Viceroyalty of Lord Ripon—the Ilbert Bill agitation—the All-India Political agitation—Foundation of the Indian National Congress—Save the British Empire theory.

PROGRESS AND RECOVERY (1856—76) :—

The first twenty years of the Crown Administration were an uneventful period of progress and recovery. They deserve a passing reference as they saw gradual progress of India on modernist lines. During this period the reorganisation of administration, the reform of judicial and educational systems, the development of communications, roads, railways and telegraph brought the country within a uniform political system. There was steady growth of modern industry. Before 1872-3, India could count about twenty cotton mills in the Bombay Presidency. Their number rose to fifty-eight by 1879-80 and they were employing nearly forty-thousand persons. India's industrial progress on scientific lines was now well-nigh assured. The development of the Indian press was especially rapid in this period. By the time Lord Lytton became the Viceroy in 1876, the press in the Indian languages was in a flourishing condition. At that time

"There were about sixty-two such papers in the Bombay Presidency, Marathi, Gujarati, Hindustani and Persian ; about sixty in the North-Western Provinces, Oudh and the Central Provinces ; some twenty-eight in Bengal ; about nineteen in Madras, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Hindustani".²

1. Thompson and Garrat : Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule p. 494

2. Barns, M : The Indian Press p. 276.

There were about 478 newspapers managed by Indians and most of them were in the vernacular languages. The province of Bengal, we are told, was over-flooded by cheap news-sheets in the Bengali language. They supplied all sort of information even to illiterate listeners at stationary stalls or grocers' shops.³ With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, India's contacts with the European world became more intimate. The knowledge of European methods in government, sciences, industry, medicine etc. energised her political consciousness.

EARLY PUBLIC ASSOCIATIONS :—

The expansion of education and the growth of the press were instrumental in shaping enlightened public opinion. The middle-class intelligentsia began to take active rational interest in public affairs and became more and more critical of the actions of the government. As early as 1829, we observe that Raja Ram Mohan Roy organised petitions signed by both Hindus and Muslims against the Jury Act passed by the Parliament. This Act perpetuated racial and religious distinctions in the British judicial administration. It denied Hindus and Muslims the privilege of trying Christians, both Europeans and Indian-converts and debarred them from a seat in the Grand Jury even for the trial of their co-religionists. About 1838, Dwarkanath Tagore organised the Land-holders' Society—an organisation of the land-lords of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. W. C. Hurry, the editor of the 'Englishman' was one of its Secretaries. The object of the association was to watch the working of the land-revenue administration of the East India Company. In 1839, George Thompson, a pro-Indian English-man, organised the British India Society in London with Lord Brougham as its President. At the invitation of Dwarkanath Tagore he visited India and inaugurated the Bengal British India Society in 1843. It aimed at promoting the interests of people by all peaceful and lawful means. In 1851, the Land-Holder's Society and British India Society were amalgamated to form the British Indian Association. It was "a pioneer in political agitation" and under its auspices "several famous men of Bengal took to public life and came into prominence."⁴ It owned the "Hindu Patriot," which was edited

3 Indian National Evolution p. 24.

4, Chintamani, C. Y : Indian Politics Since the Mutiny p. 5.

with great distinction by Harish Chandra Mukerjee. He is spoken of as a fearless critic of the bureaucracy and one wielding a trenchant pen and having wonderful command of nervous and classical English. He was "a terror to the bureaucracy as well as to the White colonists and planters in Bengal."⁵ The 'Hindu Patriot' was certainly the first Indian paper with a definite political tone. It criticised Lord Dalhousie's annexation policy and argued that the Mutiny was "brought about by the conduct of a few hot-headed men."⁶ In the Madras Presidency, Guzulu Lakshminarasu Chetty started the 'Crescent' in 1843 with the object of educating the British Masters on Indian grievances. He vigorously protested against the policy of the Madras Government which gave open sanction to the proselytising practices of the Christian missionaries. He succeeded in having an official enquiry into the grievances of the peasantry which had broken out into riots in 1846. In 1852, the Madras Native Association was established and he organised a petition to the Parliament pressing for various reforms. The petition said :

*"That the grievances of your petitioners arise principally from the excessive taxation and the vexations which accompany its collections, and the insufficiency, delays, and expenses of the Company's Courts of Law; that their chief wants are the construction of roads, bridges and works for the supply of irrigation, and a better provision for the education of the people; they also desire a reduction of public expenditure, and a form of local government more generally conducive to the happiness of the subjects and the prosperity of the country".*⁷

Similar movement for reforms was also working its way in the Bombay Presidency. The Bombay Association formed in 1852 through the efforts of Jugganath Sankarsett, the first non-official member of the Bombay Legislative Council established in 1863, organised a petition to the Parliament, demanding an enlightened system of government. This body was later replaced by the Bombay Presidency Association, which under the direction of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Sir Dinshah Wacha, established

5. Ray, P. C. Life and Times of C. R. Das p. 13

6. Cunning J. . Political India p. 35,

7. Mitra . The Indian Annual Register 1936, Vol. I, p. 64,

its position as an important public body. In 1866, Dadabhai Naoroji organised in London the East India Association with the object of focussing the attention of the British public on Indian problems. The Association

"provided a forum for all possessed of any special information or views on Indian and colonial subjects. At its meetings was always to be seen a brilliant assemblage of prominent Englishmen, Indians and Anglo-Indians, exchanging views on Indian affairs, uniting in voicing Indian grievances and stimulating, so far as possible, the British public and the British Government to take a deeper interest in India than they had previously evinced" 8

Towards the seventies, Mahadev Govind Ranade, the great educationist and social reformer, organised the Sarvajanic Sabha at Poona. He was also connected with the foundation of the Deccan Sabha and Gopal Krishna Gokhale was its Secretary for several years.

These associations did useful work in laying the foundations of organised public life. They discussed problems connected with people's welfare and started political propaganda for reforms. They suggest that there was sufficient enlightened material in the country available for organised political activity. They were, however, local bodies representing local interests and could not chalk out definite lines of political work. They were also incapable of sustained, organised political propaganda. Nor were they inspired by the idea of nationality and a common nationalist consciousness. An organised Indian public opinion was a later development. It was under Lord Lytton and Ripon that we have the beginnings of an organised all-India political agitation. During this period the Civil Service and the Ilbert Bill controversies fired the political consciousness of the intelligentsia and gave birth to nationalist agitation. The years 1876-84 are therefore a significant period of modern Indian history.

THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD LYTTON (1876-80):--

"In the evolution of political progress", writes Surendrath Banerjea, "bad rulers are often a blessing in disguise." Lord

Lytton certainly helped to stir the educated community into life, "a result that years of agitation would perhaps have failed to achieve."⁹ The Duke of Devonshire spoke of him as the very reverse of what an Indian Viceroy ought to have been, altogether lacking in imagination, and unsympathetic to the legitimate aspirations of the people. He was a creature of Disraeli, who delighted in spectacular tricks and feats displaying the pomp of the Empire. In 1877, when South India was suffering from an acute famine, Lytton enacted "the costly and gigantic farce"¹⁰ of the Delhi Durbar at which Queen Victoria was proclaimed as the Empress of India.¹¹ "Nero was fiddling while Rome was burning", was the comment of a Calcutta journalist on the assemblage which meant terrific waste of public money at a period of crisis. Lytton's aggressive war against Afghanistan, considered as an attempt at annexing the moon, swelled military expenditure. Its burden fell on the poor people who were already on the verge of starvation. The controversy relating to the duties imposed in 1871 on imports of cotton goods further aroused much indignation. Lord Salisbury, who succeeded the Duke of Argyll as the Secretary of State in the Conservative Cabinet of Disraeli formed in 1874, pressed the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook for their repeal. The Viceroy could not see eye to eye with the S. O. S. and had to resign. With Lytton's appointment there was little difficulty. The Lancashire capitalists were also getting impatient and no political party in England could afford to incur their displeasure. On July 11, 1877, the Parliament passed a resolution recommending the repeal of the cotton duties. In forwarding this resolution to the Government of India, Lord Salisbury referred with alarm to the fact

"That five more mills were to begin work ; and that it was estimated that by the end of March 1877 there would be 1231284 spindles employed in India".¹²

Lord Lytton sacrificed the mild import duties on cotton as a sop to the Lancashire capitalists. This measure injured the interests of the infant textile industry of India and was opposed by the

9. A Nation in Making p. 63

10. Mazumdar, A. C. : Indian National Evolution p. 31

11. Ibid.

12. Dutt, R : Economic History of India in the Victorian Age p. 411.

majority of his Executive Council. Even the European Chambers of Commerce of Madras and Calcutta protested against the measure in vain. The Arms Act of his Viceroyalty further outraged Indian opinion. It prevented Indians from carrying arms without government license. The foreign nationals, Europeans, Eurasians, Anglo-Indians or "any scum of earth" that the ocean cast on Indian shores were not affected by it. It made mischievous distinction between Indians and Europeans and

"inaugurated a policy of mistrust and suspicion, utterly undeserved and strongly resented by our people, and it imposed upon us a badge of racial inferiority".¹³

The Vernacular Press Act was another odious measure passed in April 1878 in a single sitting of the Imperial Legislative Council. It was the most oppressive enactment in the history of press legislation so far and fell on the educated community as a thunderbolt. It gave full authority to the magistrate to demand security from a printer or publisher, or an undertaking not to publish anything against the government. In case such material was published the government had the authority to confiscate the plant. No appeal was allowed to any judicial authority against the decision of the magistrate. In introducing the Bill, the Legal member referred to the anti-British tone of the Vernacular Press,

"which would seem to exist only for the sake of spreading seditious principles, of bringing the Government and its European Officers into contempt and of exciting antagonism between the governing race and the people of the country".¹⁴

But, while almost the entire Vernacular press was gagged, nothing was done at restraining the Anglo-Indian press, which by its vindictive anti-Indian tone stirred up racial passions. The heedless measures of Lytton's government provided stimulus to public life and gave birth to nationalist agitation.

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION :—

In the direction of organised political agitation, Bengal, which was the most enlightened province, naturally showed the

13. Surendranath : A Nation in Making p 50.

14. Lovett, V : A History of the Indian National Movement p. 22.

light to the rest of the country. In June 1875, Surendranath Banerjea founded the Indian Association as the spokesman of the educated middle classes. Mr. Anand Mohan Bose, a distinguished product of the Calcutta University and the first Indian wrangler at Cambridge was its first Secretary. In the opinion of Mr. Fawcett, "there were not half a dozen speakers like him in the Commons."¹⁵ The objects of this association were:—

1. The creation of a strong body of public opinion in the country.
2. The unification of the Indian races and peoples upon the basis of common political interests and aspirations.
3. The promotion of friendly feeling between Hindus and Muslims.
4. The inclusion of the masses in the great public movements of the day.

The Indian Association was the first political body inspired by nationalist considerations and was the "precursor of the National Congress. In the words of its founder, it was intended to be "the centre of an all India movement." Surendranath writes :

"For even then, the conception of a unified India, derived from the inspiration of Maizzini, (the Italian patriot) or at any rate, of bringing all India upon the same common political platform, had taken firm possession of the minds of the Indian leaders in Bengal. We accordingly resolved to call the new political body the Indian Association".¹⁶

The Civil Service Agitation.—The Civil Service issue was utilized by this association for organising an all-India agitation. The recruitment to the Indian Civil Service was made through a competitive examination held in London once a year and Indian students were permitted to appear at it. In the time of Lord Lytton it was proposed to close this service altogether for Indians. Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State, served the same purpose by reducing the maximum age of admission to the competition to 19 years. According to Banerjea, this measure was regarded throughout India "as a deliberate attempt to blast the prospects

15. Surendranath pp. 38-39.

16. Ibid p. 41.

of Indian candidates for the Indian Civil Service."¹⁷ The Indian Association succeeded in rousing the spirit of united action on this issue among the educated classes.

Mr. Banerjea visited different provinces "to unite them through a sense of common grievances and the inspiration of a common resolve"¹⁸ His tour of Northern India in 1877, during the course of which he addressed crowded meetings at important towns, was described by Sir Henry Cotton as "a triumphal progress."¹⁹ The success of his campaign showed "that a common system of administration and education had prepared the ground for the realisation of one of our most cherished ideals, namely united action by the different Indian provinces for the fulfilment of our common national aims and aspirations"²⁰ The year following, he undertook a tour of South India and mobilised support to his move. He demanded two things: the raising of the age-limit for the Civil Service Examination, and the holding of simultaneous examinations in England and in India. The association also organised an All-India memorial on the subject to the House of Commons and the educated classes heartily responded to the call for subscriptions to finance it. Mr. Lal Mohan Ghosh, a brilliant orator of his age, proceeded to England and made the British public and legislature familiar with Indian grievances. The association also organised agitation for the repeal of the Vernacular Act and Gladstone, the leader of the Liberal party promised sympathetic consideration in case his party was returned to power at the general elections.

VICEROYALTY OF LORD RIPON 1880-84 :—

The spirit of political agitation received fresh strength in the time of Ripon, nominated by the Liberal cabinet of Gladstone. A pious, god-fearing Catholic, he was a well-meaning statesman. He made an honest effort at implementing the pledges of Victoria's Proclamation of 1856. Moral earnestness, says Sir Henry Cotton, was his greatest virtue.²¹ He concluded an honourable treaty with the Amir of Afghanistan and relieved the country of the heavy expenditure on the stupid war. He repealed the Verna-

17. Ibid p. 44.

18. Ibid p. 44

19. Ibid p. 51

20. Ibid p. 46

21. Op. Cited in Zacharias, H. C. E. : *Renascent India* p. 107.

cular Press Act and made himself popular with the intelligentsia. During his period the Indian Association took up the question of the reform of local self-government and Ripon's resolution on the subject was very much influenced by its proposals. He also made a just attempt at removing a serious anomaly in judicial administration. Till his day Indian magistrates of the Civil Service could not try European offenders although their European subordinates of the same service could try them. This discrimination weakened the authority and prestige of Indian officers. Sir Courtney Ilbert, his Law-Member, introduced in 1883 a bill removing this disqualification of the Indian magistracy. But this measure proved like a spark thrown into a powder magazine and generated an explosion of European feelings.

Ilbert Bill Agitation :—The European community in India formed a Defence Association and raised over a lac of rupees for carrying on vigorous agitation against the Bill. They organised meetings condemning the Bill and raised a cry that the 'black magistrates' would abuse their authority and fill their 'harems' with white women. This measure made Ripon very unpopular with the Europeans and Anglo-Indians. We are informed that at Calcutta, a conspiracy was hatched by some of them to overpower the sentries of the Government House and pack him off to England via the Cape of Good Hope. The Bill was dropped in the original form. Only Indian District Magistrates and Sessions Judges were given the authority to try Europeans. The European culprits could, however, even for trivial cases, claim trial by jury of which at least half the members were to be Europeans.

All India Political Agitation :—The Anglo-Indian agitation against the Ilbert-Bill carried on throughout the length and breadth of India was a portent. It showed that "the only people who have any right to India are the British"²² and advanced the cause of Indian unity. It was, writes Surendranath, an eye-opener and "revealed, in its grim nakedness, our real political status." He further says :

"No self-respecting Indian could sit idle under the fierce light of that revelation. It was a call to high patriotic duty to those who understood its significance".²³

The unpopularity of Ripon with the European community made him extremely popular among the Indians and we are told that :

*"The press and the platform sang his praise. The country was ablaze with excitement. Never before under British rule had the country been so enthusiastic in political matters. In Lord Ripon, they thought, they had found a political Messiah."*²⁴

His departure "was the occasion of popular demonstrations unparalleled in Indian annals."²⁵ The bureaucracy was almost knocked senseless and Sir Auckland Colvin, the Indian Finance Minister exclaimed. If it be real what does it mean? "The dry bones in the open valley," said he, "had become instinct with life."²⁶ The Ilbert-Bill controversy taught the lesson of effective political agitation to educated India. The success of European agitation was due to the failure of Indians in making united effort in favour of the Bill. If political progress was to be achieved in future a national party was necessary for united action. Soon after, we have, under the auspices of the Indian Association, the first effective beginnings towards a national movement anticipating the Congress. Had not the Congress been started later, the Indian Association would have assumed the political leadership of the nation.

During Ripon's government, "a bright vision presented itself to the gaze of India," and the intelligentsia aspired to bring the administration under its complete control through gradual stages.²⁷ The aspiration for freedom began with the demand for representative institutions and greater association of people with administration in positions of authority. The Indian Association took up the question of representative government, and the movement developed owing to the intensity of national feeling aroused by the European agitation. The Association organised the first National Conference from Dec' 28 to Dec' 30 in 1883 at the Albert Hall in Calcutta. This conference discussed almost all the questions which formed the plank of the Congress agitation at a later date. The leaders who participated in the conference

24. Lajpat Rai : Young India p. 120.

25. Surendranath p. 88

26. Ibid

considered it as the first stage towards a National Parliament. The conference was certainly "a unique spectacle" marked by "immense enthusiasm and earnestness" throughout the three days' session, "at the end of which every one present seemed to have received a new light and a novel inspiration."²⁸ The conference could not be organised next year. But the great International Exhibition held at Calcutta in 1884 further convinced the Indian leaders of the possibility of carrying on an all-India agitation on sound lines. This year we find Surendranath making his third tour in North India, preaching the gospel of national unity and stressing the need of a National Fund for political propaganda.

On Dec.' 24, 1884, the Indian Association presented an address of welcome to Lord Dufferin, the successor of Ripon. It pressed the question of reconstituting and reforming the Provincial Legislative Councils. It demanded the right of interpellation to Indian members, their control over the budget, their election to the Councils etc. In Dec.' 1885, the association organised second National Conference almost at the same time when arrangements were being made for holding the first Congress session at Bombay. It was a grand success and it drew delegates from distant places such as Banaras, Allahabad, Assam, Bombay etc. The Mohammedan Association of Bengal co-operated with the Indian Association. Mr. H. J. S. Cotton I. C. S. and the Ambassador of Nepal were the distinguished guests among a gathering of about 200 delegates. The proceedings were marked by animated discussions and patriotic fervour. The conference passed resolutions in favour of the reform of the Legislative Councils, the modification of the Arms Act, reduction in public expenditure. It pressed for the separation of the Judiciary from the Executive, reform of Police administration, and simultaneous examinations to the I. C. S. The conference hailed the birth of the Congress with cheers when it was announced to it on the closing day that the first Indian National Congress was to meet at Bombay shortly after.

The National Conferences were an off-shoot of the nationalist feeling which was groping for expression in a nationalist organisation. The Indian Association during Ripon's Viceroyalty had

evidently assumed the character of such an organisation. Its leaders, prudently enough, co-operated with the Congress and retained their association as a provincial body. Under Lord Dufferin there was further progress in national agitation and Indian nationalism found her voice in the Indian National Congress. The periods of Lytton and Ripon were, truly speaking, the seed-time of national agitation.

FOUNDATION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS :—

The initiative in the direction of founding the Indian National Congress was taken up by Allen Octavian Hume, a retired British Official, Scotch by birth and democrat by training. His father, Joseph Hume, was a fearless patriot and reformer. After his retirement from service in India, he was a leader of the Radical Wing in the Parliament for about thirty years. A. O. Hume joined the Bengal Civil Service in 1849 and had a distinguished official career. From 1870 to 1879 he worked as Secretary to the Government of India. It is stated that Lord Lytton offered him the Lieut. Governorship of the Punjab but he declined the appointment,

*"saying that the Lieutenant Governorship meant a great deal of entertaining, and for this neither his wife nor he himself cared : he would much rather be Home Member. Lord Lytton then recommended him for Home Member and a K. C. S. I., but this recommendation Lord Salisbury refused, on the ground that Mr. Hume was "stiffening Lord Northbrook" against the repeal of the cotton duties."*²⁹

After his retirement from service in 1880, he settled down at Simla and matured his plans for the establishment of an Indian national organisation. In a letter addressed to the "Graduates" of the Calcutta University, dated March 1st 1883, he spoke his mind firmly on the Indian problem. He exhorted the educated youngmen of the country, "her most cultured and enlightened minds, her most favoured sons," to labour in the cause of the mental, moral, social and political progress of the Motherland. He appealed to them to scorn "personal ease and selfish objects," cultivate patriotism, and "make a resolute struggle to secure

greater freedom for yourselves and your country." They must know how to act and strike a blow for their freedom. He just pleaded for a little army of action :

*"If only fifty-men, good and true, can be found to join as founders, the thing can be established, and the further development will be comparatively easy."*³⁰

Later on, he was in consultation with eminent public men of the country and with their collaboration formed the "Indian National Union." He then proceeded to England to secure the support of the progressive elements of British public life. On his return the Union was finally christianised as the Indian National Congress and its first session was held at Bombay in Dec. 1885.

SAVE THE BRITISH EMPIRE THEORY :—

Various views have been expressed in connection with the foundation of the National Congress. The writers of the Marxian School like Lester Hutchinson are of opinion that it was the work of Indian politicians who sought to defend the interests of Indian capitalism.³¹ The capitalist element, however, does not figure actively in Indian public life till the beginnings of the 20th century, and it was not till the close of the World War I, that it could exercise decisive influence on the councils of the Congress. According to Annie Besant, the Congress was a by-product of Theosophy, and that its workers "conceived the idea of a political National Movement for the saving of the Motherland."³² The members of the Theosophical Society were undoubtedly eminent public workers and they figure in the Congress movement. But other accounts do not bear out that the idea of founding the Congress was mooted out just after the meeting of the annual convention of the Theosophical Society at Adyar in 1884. The popular view regarding the foundation of the Congress is that it was the work of British Officials who were eager to save the Empire from violent overthrow. The early Indian leaders of the Congress co-operated with them in the task of directing nationalist agitation on constitutional lines.

30. Ibid pp. 50-53.

31. The Empire of the Nabobs.

32. How India Wrought for Freedom pp. 1-2.

William Wedderburn and Lala Lajpat Rai, both leaders of the Congress, are forceful exponents of this view, and later writers have generally expressed agreement with it. According to them the early Congress workers were impressed with the prospect of internal revolt against the British Government, and they strived to avert such a catastrophe.

William Wedderburn writes that A. O. Hume, the guiding spirit of the Congress movement till his death in 1912, had "exceptional knowledge of what was going on below the surface ; and he knew that there was imminent risk of popular outbreak." While he was in service, he realized "with increasing anxiety, that the existing government, administered by foreign officials on autocratic lines, was dangerously out of touch with the people" ; and that there was "a great gulf fixed between the foreign bureaucracy, self-centred on the heights of Simla, and the millions painfully toiling in the plains below." Mr. Hume perused the voluminous secret police reports which revealed the growth of popular discontent and the spread of underground conspiratorial activity. The mood of the young generations was stirred by vague revolutionary ideology and "the physical suffering of the many, acted on by the intellectual discontent of the few, was rapidly bringing popular unrest to the danger point."³³ Lajpat Rai holds similar opinion and writes :

*"But one thing is clear, that the Congress was started more with the object of saving the British Empire from danger than with that of winning political liberty for India. The interests of the British Empire were primary and those of India only secondary, and no one can say that the Congress has not been true to that ideal."*³⁴

He admits that men like Ranade, Dadabhai, W. C. Bonnerjee etc. were not tools in the hands of the Britishers and were sincere well-wishers of the country. But they were not interested in leading a popular movement of liberation. There is, however, an inconsistency in the theory. It was during Lytton's Viceroyalty that Mr. Hume had apprehensions of insurrections and the Congress was founded seven years later in Dufferin's Viceroyalty. Lalaji accepts Wedderburn's explanation that there

33. A. O. Hume, pp. 1-2.

34. Young India p. 126.

was a lull in the time of Lord Ripon.³⁵

There is no doubt that in the post-Mutiny era there was again accumulation of materials for anti-British outbreaks. Owing to their abject poverty the masses were seething with discontent. There was deterioration in racial relations between the rulers and the ruled. The Indian intelligentsia was also suffering from a sense of frustration. The tendency towards lawlessness was on the increase everywhere. It was feared that a section of the intelligentsia was eager to lead the people towards a national revolt. The immediate motive of Hume and his Indian friends was to save the British Empire from this danger. The annual report of the Congress for 1889 also tells us :

"There was towards the close of Lord Lytton's administration a great deal of organisation for unavowed, and, probably even to its originators scarcely understood, purposes."

*"It has been the chief glory of the Congress movement that aided by the enthusiasm elicited by good Lord Ripon's sympathetic rule, it has swept away all this fungoid undergrowth, and sweetened all political agitation by working it out into the whole some light of the open day."*³⁶

Hume himself was of the opinion that the Congress would work as a safety-valve for revolutionary discontent, and that it succeeded as such. In reply to the charges levelled against the Congress by Sir Auckland Colvin, the Governor of the United Provinces, he wrote :

*"No choice was left to those who gave the primary impetus to the movement, the ferment due to the creation of the Western ideas, education, invention and appliances, was at work with a rapidly increasing intensity, and it became of paramount importance to find for its products an overt and constitutional channel for discharge, instead of leaving them to fester as they had already commenced to do beneath the surface."*³⁷

35. Ibid p. 133.

36. Annie Besant ; How India Wrought for Freedom p. 57.

37. Wedderburn, W : A. O. Hume p. 77.

He justified his propaganda on the ground that British rule had failed to solve the economic problem, the peasantry was scourged by famine and despair, that the government maintained no intimate touch with the people. In his opinion, so long as the administration was not leavened by representative Indian element, there was no safety for the people as well as the rulers. The excitement and restlessness of the Indian mind required a safe outlet.

It is certainly difficult to challenge the truth of 'Save the British Empire' theory. Mr. Hume had become convinced that the years just before the foundation of the Congress were dangerous and that the situation was getting desperate. He met the authorities at Simla and the Marquiss of Dufferin and Ava. The Viceroy, too, was convinced that India needed a political organisation which could perform the functions "which Her Majesty's opposition did in England". He considered it desirable both in the interests of the ruled and the rulers that Indian politicians met together annually, examined the defects of the administration and made suggestions for its improvement.³⁸ The formation of the Congress was blessed by the ruling class and loyalty to the throne was the driving inspiration of the organisation in its early career. The immediate effect of the establishment of the Congress also was to tone down the national agitation already in progress under the direction of Bengali nationalists. By securing the support of the educated classes, the Congress isolated them from the masses who might be inclined towards violence and terrorism. The result was the safe and smooth development of national agitation, working towards the political progress and harmony of the interests of the different groups of the nation. In fairness to the early workers of the Congress, it must be emphasised that revolutionary politics was not the taste of the upper-class intelligentsia. It was ruled out "as unsuited to the circumstances of India and as fatal to its normal development, along the lines of peaceful and orderly progress."³⁹

38. W. C. Bonnerjee, op, cited in Pattabhi's *History of the Congress*, Vol. I p 15

39. Surendranath p. 43.

CHAPTER III

ASCENDANCY OF LIBERALISM (1885-1905)

Progress of constitutional agitation—Popularity of the Congress—the work of the Congress—Success of the Congress—Weakness of the Congress—the rise of Muslim communalism.

PROGRESS OF CONSTITUTIONAL AGITATION :—

About the eighties of the last century, effective organisation of public life on nationalist lines was considered a Herculean job requiring patient labour of many years. The early nationalists who met on the Congress platform were aware of the magnitude of their task. W. C. Bonnerjee, the doyen of the Calcutta bar and the President-elect of the first session of the Congress held at Bombay in Dec., 1885, defined it as follows :

1. "The promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst all the more earnest workers in our country's cause in the various parts of the Empire."
2. "The eradication by direct friendly personal intercourse of all possible race, creed, or provincial prejudices amongst all lovers of our country, and the further development and consolidation of those sentiments of national unity that had their origin in their beloved Lord Ripon's ever memorable reign."

This session was attended by about seventy-two eminent public workers from all over the country. They included many who became famous in the nationalist history. At this session, Dadabhai Naoroji spoke about the British rule as another "Asiatic despotism", making the bitter reflection : "We are only British drudges or slaves."¹ G. Subramania Iyer, the editor of

1. Annie Besant : *How India Wrought for Freedom* p. 11.

the 'Hindu' and "one of the boldest and farthest-sighted of the Madras leaders",² moved the first resolution demanding a Royal Commission of enquiry into Indian Administration. Many officials, British and Indian, attended the session and among them was Mahadeo Govind Ranade, the intellectual giant of the Deccan and a member of the Poona High Court. It is interesting to note that the resolutions passed at this Congress were first discussed at a private meeting held at the residence of Principal Wordsworth of Elphinstone College. It was attended by distinguished officials of the Civil Service like Sir William Wedderburn. Sir Henry Cotton, the Chief Secretary to Government, took part even in the discussions of the open session.

The second session of the Congress was held at Calcutta under the Presidentship of Dadabhai Naoroji, and to which various associations returned about 406 delegates. Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy received some of them as "distinguished visitors to the capital"³ and entertained them at a garden party. The Madras session of 1889 recorded a still larger number of delegates, about 600 and the Congress here had its first Muslim President, Mr. Badruddin Tyabji. Raja Sir T. Madhava Rao, who had served as the Prime Minister of many States in South India, was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. He spoke of the Congress as "the soundest triumph of British Administration and a Crown of Glory to the British Nation."⁴ The Governor of Madras honoured the delegates by receiving them at the Government House at a brilliant function. At this session, Mr. Eardley Norton of the Madras bar, who was abused by his country-men as a "veiled seditionist" for his participation in the Congress, made a remarkable speech. He said :

"If it be sedition, gentlemen, to rebel against all wrong, if it be sedition to insist that the people should have a fair share in the administration of their own country and affairs, if it be sedition to resist class tyranny, to raise my voice against oppression, to mutiny against injustice, to insist upon a hearing before sentence, to uphold the liberties of the individual, to vindicate our

2. Ibid p. 9.

3. Ibid p. 29.

4. Ibid p. 35.

*common right to gradual but ever advancing reform—if this be sedition, I am right glad to be called a seditionist ; and doubly, aye trebly glad when I look around me to-day to know and feel I am ranked as one among such a magnificent array of seditionists."*⁵

At Madras, the Congress took a bold step in deciding that any resolution affecting the interest of a particular clan or community, if it was objected to by the representatives of that community, even if they were in a minority, was not to be taken up for consideration. This decision was taken at the resolution urging the prohibition of cow-slaughter proposed by Raja Sekhahreswar of Bengal. A resolution of such character was considered inopportune especially when the Muslim community under the leadership of Sir Syed Ahmed was not exerting its weight in the Congress.

By now the bureaucracy had begun feeling rather uneasy about the growing spirit of nationalism. The British conservative press especially began heaping virulent rubbish on the nationalists. Mr Hume's stirring pamphlets and poems to rally educated India round the Congress also created serious resentment in the official circles. He was criticised as advocating the methods resembling Irish Fenianism. Sir Auckland Colvin, the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces openly assailed the Congress and had a wordy warfare with him. Naturally the fourth Congress session which met at Allahabad in 1888 has a troubled history. According to the official Congress report, it was "heralded by a tumultuous outbreak of opposition."⁶ Sir Auckland Colvin was plainly hostile to it. Pandit Ajodhyanath, Chairman of the Reception Committee, found it difficult to obtain a suitable site for holding the session owing to the hostility of the military and civil authorities. At last the Maharaja of Darbhanga purchased the Lowther castle just opposite to the Government House and placed it at the disposal of the reception committee. It was too much for the Governor who moved out on a tour while the Congress was holding its meetings. The Congress had here its first British President, Mr George Yule, a leading merchant of Calcutta. The number of delegates attending it was 1248, double to that at Madras in the previous year. The session was marked by lively discussions covering the entire

5. Ibid pp. 40-41

6. Ibid p. 54.

field of British administration, and was undoubtedly more successful than any of the previous sessions. In the opinion of C. Y. Chintamani, the report of this session "may be commended for study as a political education by itself."⁷ At this session, Sheikh Raza Hussain Khan, produced a Fatwa in support of the Congress from the leader of the Sunni community of Lucknow. He said, "it is not the Muhammadans, but their official masters, who are opposed to the Congress."⁸ Munshi Sajjad Hussain, the editor of the Lucknow 'Punch' made the most interesting speech in Urdu. The British, he said, had distributed many blessings and the Police was one, and that a simple Chowkidar or Constable had greater power than a Lieut-Governor or Viceroy. Here is a passage from his speech :

*"The humblest labourer in the village, the most exalted noble in the city, are equally under the control of these distinguished officials. There is no place, no spot, where their Highnesses the Police, like the Angel of Death, are not present. Let a man displease them in the slightest, and see the beneficence of our kind police."*⁹

The Congress had by now earned the goodwill of the entire educated India and become the register of Indian nationalism. Lord Dufferin, under whose prelacy it had its inception, too, denounced it as a seditious body at his retirement. The Bombay session of 1889 was the most impressive so far and the visit of Mr. Bradlaugh M.P. "imparted a new impetus to the Congress cause."¹⁰ Mr. Pherozeshah Mehta, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, spoke of "the nationalising tendency which is now so powerfully leavening New India", and welcomed Charles Bradlaugh, "on whom had descended the mantle of John Bright and Professor Fawcett,"¹¹ In reply to the Congress address of welcome, the distinguished visitor said :

*"For whom should I work, if not for the people? Born of the people, trusted by the people, I will die of the people. And I know no geographical or race limitations."*¹²

7. Indian politics since the Mutiny p. 23.

8. Annie Besant p. 59.

9. Ibid p. 66.

10. Surendranath Banerjee : A Nation in Making p. 110

11. Annie Besant pp. 76-77.

12. Ibid p. 99.

On his return to England, he introduced in the Parliament a bill for the reform and expansion of the Legislative Councils, which embodied the views of the Indian educated community. Plainly enough, the British Parliament, the Mother of Democracy, could not approve of it, and the Bill which was passed in 1892 by the Conservative Party was a different version. The Congress at this session decided to send a deputation to England to press on the British nation the reforms advocated by it. The members of the deputation were seasoned men, A.O. Hume, Pherozeshah Mehta, Man Mohan Ghosh, W. C. Bonnerjee, Sharifuddin, Eardley Norton, R.N. Mudholkar and Surendranath Banerjea. They reached London in April 1890 and addressed meetings in the various towns of England, Wales, Scotland. The deputation achieved nothing positive but made tremendous impression on the British audience. It also persuaded Gladstone, the leader of the Liberal party, to lend his full weight for the introduction of the elective principle in Lord Cross's Bill pending before the House. In a debate at the Oxford Union, the deputation could secure a vote in favour of the Congress stand, although speakers on the opposition included men like Lord Hugh Cecil. It was here that Surendranath pleaded in memorable words India's case for democratic government and said :

*"Let me remind this House that they (Hindus) come from a great and ancient stock ; that at a time when the ancestors of the most enlightened European nations were roaming in their native woods and forests, our fathers had founded great empires, established noble cities, and cultivated a system of ethics, a system of religion, and a noble language which at the present moment excites the admiration of the civilized world"*¹³ (Lord Cheers).

The bureaucracy was now plainly hostile to the nationalist propaganda and placed hurdles in the path of the Congress. When the Congress was about to meet at Lucknow in Dec. 1899, Sir Anthony MacDonnell, the Lieut-Governor did not permit it to hold its session near the city as a security-measure against plague. It met at a distance of about seven or eight miles from the city "amid sugar-canes and rice-fields, when the delegates were

tormented by flies during the day and by wild boars during the night".¹⁴ "Between 1896 and 1906", writes Surendranath, "in the course of a decade, a marked change in the attitude of official opinion in regard to the Congress had taken place".¹⁵ In each succeeding year, Indian nationalism, however, recorded steady progress and bureaucratic truculence gave it confidence and strength. As the next century opened, the clouds over the Indian horizon darkened and the age complacency and quiet vanished from Indian politics. It was with great difficulty that the astute Grand Old man of India, Dadabhai Naoroji could manage the Calcutta Session of 1906. It was here that the Congress formulated the creed of Swaraj and opened a fresh chapter in its history.

POPULARITY OF THE CONGRESS :—

In a few years of constitutional agitation, the Congress established itself as a permanent national institution. It drew to its platform the educated elements of practically all the communities and became the brain and voice of the country. At the second Congress, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya expressed the hope that the Indian people were not dumb any longer. "India has found a voice at last in this great Congress, and in it," said he, "and through it, we call on England to be true to her traditions, her instincts and herself, and grant us our rights as free-born British subjects."¹⁶ Through the Congress a common public opinion became possible. Sir Henry Cotton, a member of the civil service, and an eye-witness of the movement since its birth, writes in this connection :

"If its members have not in any considerable measure succeeded in moulding the policy of Government, they have at least exercised an immense influence in developing the history of their country and the character of their country-men. They have become a power in the land, and their voice peals like a trumpet-note from one end of India to the other".¹⁷

Working on Western ideas and ideals, the Congress infused benevolence and the spirit of social service in national character. Its

14. Ibid p. 147.

15. Ibid p. 146.

16. Annie Besant p. 28

17. New India p. 8.

propaganda promoted national consciousness, sense of national unity and inspired high ideals of public service. Early in 1890, Lord Lansdowne, the Governor-General, recognised that the Congress represented the advanced liberal party of India.

THE WORK OF THE CONGRESS :—

At the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1906, Dadabhai Naoroji, the President-elect dwelt on the work of the organisation. Its first object was to examine the policy and principles of the system of government under which India was to be governed. Its second object was to watch the British administration and work for reforms till it was radically altered and based upon right principles and policy. Before 1906, the Congress could not definitely formulate its demand for self-government or Home-Rule but representation of Indians on elective basis to the Legislatures was its recurring cry. At the second Congress, Dr. Rajendra Lal Mittra boldly stated India's case for representative institutions without which an Englishman was "a mere sham, a base imitation." "We live not under a National Government," said he, "but under a foreign bureaucracy". He observed that the foreign rulers were foreigners by birth, religion, habits, by every thing that divides humanity into different sections. They could not dive into Indian hearts, and could not ascertain their wants, feelings and aspirations.¹⁸ In moving the resolution in favour of the representation of people in the Legislative Councils at the third Congress, Surendranath proclaimed :

*"We unfurl the banner of the Congress, and upon it are written in characters of glittering gold, which none may efface, the great words of the Resolution : Representative Institutions for India."*¹⁹

The nationalist leaders ever emphasised that India was capable of administering its own affairs and that the elective principle was essential to the political training of the people. The people were to be trusted with responsibility for conducting their affairs. In his Presidential speech at the 14th. session of the Congress, Mr. Anand Mohan even suggested direct representation of India in the British Parliament to avoid the bitterness of feeling growing in the country against British rule. In the later period, on account

18. Annie Besant p. 16.

19. Ibid p. 39.

of the coolness of Great Britain towards national aspirations and the denial of civil liberties in India, the Congress acquired greater strength in its propaganda. The partition of Bengal, followed by "Russian methods of Government,"²⁰ convinced the leaders that without self-government, Indian grievances could not be rectified. The Congress, therefore, claimed for Indians all the control that Englishmen had in England. At its Calcutta session of 1906, it put forward the demand for self-government and urged the British Government to take necessary steps in that direction viz, all higher appointments to be open to Indians through competitive examinations ; adequate representation of India in the Council of the Secretary of State and the Executive Councils of the Viceroy and of the Governors of Madras and Bombay ; expansion of the Central and Provincial Legislative Councils, allowing adequate representation to the people and larger control over the financial and executive administration ; extension of the powers of the Municipal and Local bodies and minimising official control over them.

In the early period, the Congress had a searching analysis of the political grievances of the nation and demanded reforms in every sphere of administration. The subjects which taxed its energies most were the reform and expansion of the Legislative Councils, the separation of Judiciary from Executive, larger employment of Indians in public services, reform of Police, reduction in public expenditure. It was emphasised that British administration denied respectable career to ninety-nine out of every hundred people and that Indians were treated as a nation of sheep and cattle.

The Congress also gave due thought to the social and economic grievances of the people. The early records of the Congress impress us that its workers laboured hard for the welfare of the country. "The intense sympathy with the sufferings of the masses", remarks Annie Besant, "the effort to gain primary education for them, the protests against the laws and administration that were reducing the peasantry to hopeless poverty, these were all close to the heart of the Congress-men."²¹ The Congress not only voiced the hopes of the bourgeoisie and

20. Ibid p. 442

21. Ibid p. 134.

the intelligentsia, but also proclaimed the sufferings of the inarticulate masses. Its leaders laid stress on the growing poverty of the people and suggested various remedies to raise their standard of living. These were :

- (1) Reduction of the heavy costs of administration by minimising the foreign agency.
- (2) The moderate assessment of the land-tax.
- (3) The remission of taxes which pressed heavily on the poor.
- (4) The stoppage of drain to England and export of grain to foreign countries.
- (5) The extension of irrigation.
- (6) Starting of agricultural banks to issue loans to the peasants to save them from the clutches of money-lenders.
- (7) Revival of old industries and the creation of new ones.

The Congress worked earnestly in defence of the interests of growing Indian capitalism, and demanded protective tariffs from the government. At the tenth Congress, Mr. Wacha protested against the injustice of imposing excise duties on cotton goods, "crippling the infant mill industry of India."²² They obstructed the industrial development of India and showed that the Indian Government existed merely to register the will of the British capitalists.

The interests of Indians abroad too were not neglected by the Congress. At the eleventh session, it protested against the Act disfranchising Indians in the South African Republic as an insult to the entire nation. It appealed to England for the removal of disabilities on Indians in South Africa, as their sense of justice "was not perverted and not contaminated by the slavery producing atmosphere of Africa, or the tyranny producing atmosphere of India."²³ It also received contributions from Indians in Natal and Transval Colonies and from the German South Africa in token of their love of the mother-country.

The Congress was also the sentinel of people's civic rights and liberties. It raised fierce voice against repression and coercion practised by the white bureaucracy. It denounced

22. Ibid p. 184.

23. Ibid p. 217.

reactionary measures like the Arms Act which remained in force as insulting to the nation and demanded their repeal. From time to time it protested against the arbitrary powers of detention vested in the magistracy. It issued warnings to the Government that its policies of retrogression foreboded dangers. At the 1897 session, Surendranath denounced the government which prided itself on its Magna Charta and Habeus Corpus but denied the Indian people "the inestimable right of personal liberty."²⁴ In the period of Lord Curzon, the Congress cried aloud against his "insane imperialism" and "mischievous policies of repression and retrogression."

A significant aspect of the Congress propaganda in the early phase was to enlighten the British nation on Indian political demands and grievances. It secured the sympathies of many British leaders towards the national cause. The Labour leader, Charles Bradlaugh, who visited the Congress in 1899, openly assumed the title of the "Member for India." In 1889, a British Committee of the Indian National Congress was established in England and the Congress voted a sum of forty five thousands of rupees for its maintenance. In 1893, Sir William Wedderburn and W. S. Caine set up an Indian Parliamentary Committee to work for political reforms on the floor of the House of Commons. The deputations to England were another method by which the Congress popularised its cause and guarded its movement from calumny and misrepresentations.

SUCCESS OF THE CONGRESS :—

In spite of its constitutional agitation, the Congress succeeded in having Parliamentary enquiries into Indian administration. It also effected a breach, in the words of A. C. Mazumdar, "in the outer ramparts of a benevolent despotism."²⁵ The Indian Councils Act of 1892 was a political concession snatched from the Tory die-hards. It enlarged the Provincial Councils, and a few of the non-Official seats were to be filled on the basis of recommendations by local bodies and corporations. This reform was suggested by Lord Dufferin to placate the educated class, which, though small and uninfluential in his opinion, was a growing power. It was passed by the Conservative government in the time of his

24. Ibid p. 259.

25. Indian National Evolution p. 209.

successor, Lord Lansdowne. It did not, however, meet the aspirations of the intelligentsia and did not concede the right of election, and the right to vote on the budget demanded by the Congress. Against the vile propaganda of the Anglo-Indian Press, the Congress successfully pleaded India's case for representative institutions and self-government. In the year 1890, it secured the cancellation of Bengal Government's notification directing its officers not to attend the Congress sittings even as visitors. In 1894 it counteracted a very reactionary measure of the Government against the independence of the legal profession whose members were taking prominent part in the nationalist agitation. The Government introduced a bill in the supreme Legislative Council to amend the Legal Practitioners Act of 1879, and put the legal practitioners under the subordination of the District Judges and Revenue Commissioners. The various High Courts joined the Congress in protest with the result that the Bill was dropped.

WEAKNESS OF THE CONGRESS :—

The Congress agitation in the early phase lacked vigour and effectiveness. Its leaders were severe critics of the bureaucracy but sincere apologists of British rule. They worked as the unpaid Parliamentary Opposition to Her Majesty's Government in India. Lajpat Rai truly observes that the Congress "lacked essentials of a National movement." It was a "halting, half-hearted political movement depending on the sympathy and goodwill of the very class against whom it is directed." He gives the following criticism of its work :

1. "The movement was neither inspired by the people nor devised or planned by them. It was a movement not from within."
2. It lacked the essentials of a popular movement. Its leaders were not in touch with the masses.
3. It was not effective and encouraged "opportunism" and "trade" in the name of patriotism. It demanded concessions and not liberty. It was not based on sacrifice.²⁶

The movement was undoubtedly not even a middle-class movement in the true sense. It touched only the small upper strata which was hardly capable of strong political action. The

26. Lajpat Rai : Young India p. 139, 145-147,

people, illiterate and demoralised by poverty and suffering, were out of question. It is easy to reproach the early patriots, nicknamed political mendicants, for their cautious approach and reliance on British character. But they started the movement towards administrative reforms and self-government which in the fulness of time developed into a strong movement. They tended the seed of nationalism and we should harbour, as Dr. Rash Behari said at the 23rd Congress Session of 1908 "some kindly thoughts for those who too, in their day, strove to do their duty, however imperfectly, through good report and through evil report, with, it may be, a somewhat chastened fervour, but.....a fervour as genuine as that which stirs and inspires younger hearts."²⁷

THE RISE OF MUSLIM COMMUNALISM :—

The rise of Muslim Communalism is a significant feature of Indian politics of this period. It created serious complications in the evolution of nationalism and requires special treatment. The Indian environment dominated by caste and sect encourages the formation of political groups on caste and communal lines. But, in the case of Muslims the communal consciousness was intensified by various other factors which cannot be brushed aside.

SOCIO—Economic Backwardness.—The establishment of the British rule was a severe blow to the pride and respectability of the Muslim community which constituted the ruling class in Northern India. In the early period, the British policy was directed towards a systematic suppression and enfeeblement of this community. In Bengal, the tendency of the land-settlements was to effect the social degradation of the old Mussalman nobility and the official class. The permanent settlement of Lord Cornwallis elevated the Hindu collectors of Revenue to the exalted position of landlords. The result was, say Sir William Hunter who wrote about 1870-71 that :

*"During the last seventy-five years the Mussalman Houses of Bengal have either disappeared from the earth, or are at this moment being submerged beneath the new strata of society which our rule has developed....."*²⁸

The Muslims were forced out of the army, their favourite career, "because we believed that their exclusion was necessary to our

27. Annie Besant p, 475.

28. Indian Mussalmans p. 163.

safety".²⁹ The introduction of English as the official language of the Law-Courts and public departments also displaced them in administration. They were deliberately excluded from the government service. Lord Ellenborough confessed that "the race is fundamentally hostile to us, and therefore, our true policy is to conciliate the Hindus."³⁰ The authors of "The Communal Triangle in India"—rightly emphasise that "while a century of suppression had broken the great Muslim community, a century of Government patronage had ended in the emergence of a collective consciousness among the Hindus."³¹ There is no doubt that British rule created a wide disparity between the two communities and it was most marked in public administration till the end of the 19th. century. In 1871, in the civil, medical and police departments in Bengal, out of 1338 Gazetted appointments, 681 were Hindus and only 92 Muslims. In Calcutta, it is reported that there was scarcely a Government office "in which a Muhammedan can hope for any post above the rank of porter, messenger, filler of ink-pots, and mender of pens."³² The neglect of education by the Muslims, also contributed to their backwardness. In Bengal as late as 1860-62, "there was only one Mussalman to ten Hindus in our schools."³³ In the colleges, till the seventies, they hardly constituted one per cent of the student community.³⁴ The Hindus utilized every avenue opened by the British rule with the result that they went ahead of them in every phase of life. The Muslims were conscious of their inferiority and resented it. At the 12th. Congress, Rahimatulla Moham-mad Sayani, an ex-Mayor of Bombay, analysed how before the British rule, the Muslims were the rulers and the Hindus a subject race. Under the British, the Hindus became fellow-subjects and that "with their former awe dropped their courtesy also."³⁵ The sense of frustration, the memory of glories departed and consciousness of the fact that the Hindus had stolen a march over them

29. Ibid p. 165.

30. op. cited, Mehta & Patwardhan : The Communal Triangle footnote p. 82

31. Ibid p. 89.

32. Hunter : Indian Mussalmans pp. 169-170

33. Ibid p. 181.

34. Ibid p. 189.

35. Zacharias, H. C. E. : *Renascent India* p. 117.

in every sphere, fostered intense communal loyalties among the Muslims.

Revivalism :—About the end of the 18th century, the Arab revivalists started the Wahabi movement, which exercised powerful influence on the Indian Muslims. Its leader in India was Sayyid Ahmad Brelvi, born in 1786 A.D. in the district of Rae Bareilly. He began his career as a freebooter under Amir Khan Pindari, then studied Theology and ultimately took up the work of preaching. He worked hard at the restoration of Islam to its original purity and denounced the anti-Islamic practices which had crept into Muslim society. After his return from Mecca in 1823, his influence and following increased even among the turbulent Pathan tribes of the frontier areas. His disciples worked up a wave of communal enthusiasm in the Muslim population and made large conversions particularly in Bengal. From 1823 to 1849, the members of the Wahabi sect conducted the holy war against the Sikhs in the Punjab. After its conquest by the British, Wahabism organised anti-British insurrections. According to Dr. Hunter, Wahabism was one of the greatest religious revivals known to Indian history. It "developed a copious literature filled with prophecies of the downfall of the British power and devoted to the duties of Religious Rebellion."³⁶ Lord Mayo's murder in the Andamans was generally believed to be the work of a Wahabi convict. The British government sternly suppressed the movement but this suppression could not wipe out the communal consciousness fomented by it. In the later period, Hindu revivalism in an aggressive form, the Arya Samaj movement and the communal propaganda of Hindu leaders, also sharpened the communalism of the Muslim mind. There is much truth in Valentine Chirol's reflection that the tendency of Hindu revivalism was "as consistently anti-Mohammedan as anti-British, and even more so".³⁷ Revivalism, be it Hindu or Muslim, was certainly not a happy development for the growth of sturdy nationalism in which Hindus and Muslims could sink their differences.

The Aligarh Movement :—In the evolution of Muslim political consciousness, the Mohammedan College founded at Aligarh in 1877 played a very important part. It was the work of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who strived for the regeneration of his com-

munity on modern lines. His ancestors had held important positions under the Great Mughals and he loyally served the Company as a Judge in a subordinate capacity. In English education he found the cure for all the ills of his community. In 1864, he founded a scientific society in Aligarh with the object of translating European books in the Vernaculars. Five years later, he visited England and was impressed with the superiority of European civilization. The progress of Europe, he attributed to universal education and wrote :

*"What I have seen and seen daily, is utterly beyond the imagination of a native of India.....All good things, spiritual and worldly, which should be found in man, have been bestowed by the Almighty on Europe, and especially on England."*³⁸

Under the influence of Englishmen working in the College, he was convinced that an Anglo-Muslim alliance was more helpful to the Muslim community than cooperation with Hindus in the nationalist agitation. After 1885, the year of the birth of the Congress, he succeeded in pulling the Muslims from playing their part in the national movement. He started the Muslim Education Conference whose sessions were held at the same time as those of the Congress. The Patriotic Association, which he founded in cooperation with Raja Shiv Prasad of Banaras was also a reactionary body. In his memoirs, Surendranath writes, that soon after a few years, the Congress began to be dubbed as a Hindu body and that :

*"We were straining every nerve to secure the co-operation of our Mohammedan fellow countrymen in this great national work. We sometimes paid the fares of the Mohammedan delegates and offered them other facilities."*³⁹

British Patronage :—With the growth of national agitation in which the Hindus were taking a leading part, also grew the patronage of Muslim communalism by the British authorities. As early as 1889, Mr. Beck, the Principal of the the Aligarh College devised a memorial on behalf of the Muslims to oppose the Bill which Charles Bradlough introduced in the Parliament

38. Kohn, H. : Nationalism in the East p. 112

39. A Nation in Making p. 118.

to confer representative institutions on India. In 1893, the British authorities succeeded in organising the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association. Its objects were :

1. To acquaint Englishmen in general and the government in particular with the views of the Muslim community, and to protect the political rights of the Muslims.
2. To support measures that would strengthen British rule in India.
3. To spread feelings of loyalty among the people.
4. To prevent the spread of political agitation among the Muslims.⁴⁰

Later on the Anglo-Muslim Defence Association was started with the definite aim of opposing the Congress. These associations, it is true, could not flourish as before the end of the 19th century, the English-educated Muslims could be easily counted in society. But they suggest that the awakening of the Muslim community was on unpatriotic lines and it was certainly unfortunate. People should undoubtedly be proud of their heritage, have love for their community, and seek to develop all that is noble and inspiring in their culture. When communalism, however, degenerates into passion and craze and breeds hatred of others it betokens a nation's breakdown.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONSTITUTIONAL SCHOOL OF POLITICAL THOUGHT AND EMINENT PERSONALITIES.

The Westernised environment—Admiration of connection with Great Britain—Faith in British justice—Constitutionalism, the Political creed—Dadabhai Naoroji—Surendranath Banerjea—Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

THE WESTERNISED ENVIRONMENT :—

Till the period of Lord Curzon, Indian nationalism could not evolve an active school of thought. In the initial stage, it was dominated by moderate politicians who shivered at the very thought of harbouring revolutionary ideas of boycott of or non-cooperation with the government. They were eminent intellectuals and publicists, powerful orators and writers. Theirs was a brilliant age, but its brilliance was in the realm of thought and not of action. Leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, D. E. Wacha, W. C. Bonnerjee, Surendranath Banerjea, Pheroze-shah Mehta, Anand Charlu, Lal Mohan Ghosh, Rash Behari, Gopal Krishna Gokhale etc. were mostly business-men, lawyers, educationists, journalists etc. representing the upper middle-class strata of society. They were a product of the Westernised environment and were immersed in the Western lore. With all their resentment of foreign rule, they were pro-British and had genuine admiration for Western culture and institutions. While they were at the College or the University, they were mostly taught by English professors, a quiet polished race, something quite different from the usual type of the British administrator. They "plucked with both hands at the fruits of the tree of Western knowledge"; they were serious students of English thinkers and writers. They were "humble disciples" of Kant and Spencer, Burke and John Stuart Mill.¹ Bengal took the lead in agitation on nationalist

1. Chirol, V : Indian Unrest p. 24.

lines, as it was the first province to pass under the British and receive "the new wine of Western learning". It was here that the manufacture of a class of citizens, "Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, opinions, in morals and intellect", started quite early in the 19th century. In his studies on India, Lord Ronaldshay writes how :

"By the middle of the nineteenth century a period of intellectual anarchy had set in, which swept the rising generation before it like a craft which has snapped its moorings. Westernism became the fashion of the day—and westernism demanded of its votaries that they should cry down the civilization of their own country. The more ardent their admiration for everything Western, the more vehement became their denunciation of everything Eastern".²

ADMIRATION OF CONNECTION WITH GREAT BRITAIN :—

The early liberal leaders were great admirers of India's connection with Great Britain. In their view the future of India was linked with that of England. The chain of their thought in this respect may be described as such: British rule was a beginning in the process of civilizing India on Western lines. Great Britain brought India into intimate contact with the currents of modern life and put her on the track of modern civilization. English ideas bred enlightenment, love of liberty and democracy. The English language infused new life into the decadent Indian society, and created a striking change in the spirit of Indian thought. The rationalism and idealism of European thought was the inspiration of Indian nationalism. The Western society was superior to Indian society suffering from caste taboos and meaningless dogmas of idolatry. It was Great Britain which welded the diverse masses of the country into a single nation. Under British rule, India ceased to be a geographical expression and felt the throb of nationality. The gifts of British rule, common education, common methods of administration, common communications promoted common contacts and aspirations and fostered consciousness of nationality.

At the third Congress Session of 1887, the eloquent Pandit Bishan Narain Dar said that it was England which had created the

desire for free institutions. He said :

*"England has moved us from our ancient anchorage. She has cast us adrift, against our will, upon the wide waters of a seething proletariat ; and we turn back to England, and ask her to grant us that compass of representative institutions by which, amid a thousand storms, she has steered her prosperous course to the safe haven of regulated political freedom."*³

At the Sixth Congress of 1890, Pherozeshah Mehta spoke warmly about his "unbounded faith in the living and fertilising principles of English culture and English education," and declared :

*"All the great forces of English life and society, moral, social, intellectual, political, are, if slowly, yet steadily and irresistibly, declaring themselves for the choice which will make the connection of England and India a blessing to themselves and to the whole world for countless generations."*⁴

The early Congress patriots were proud to be "British subjects, the citizens of a great and free Empire," living "under the protecting shadows of one of the noblest Constitutions the world has ever seen."⁵ Loyalty to the British throne was the key-note of their utterances. They pleaded for more of the loaves and fishes of office for themselves on the basis of their attachment to the throne. They demanded democratic institutions not as the enemies of British rule but as the well-wishers of the Empire. Dadabhai Naoroji had not the least doubt that :

*"The day, I hope, is not distant when the world will see the noblest spectacle of a great Nation like the British holding out the hand of true fellow-citizenship and of justice to the vast mass of humanity of this great and ancient land of India, with benefits and blessings to the human race."*⁶

FAITH IN BRITISH JUSTICE :—

The progress of the Congress movement from 1885 to 1905 was one even march based on a firm faith in British rule and the justice of the English nation. Dr. Pattabhi in his history of the

3. Annie Besant : How India wrought for Freedom p. 42.

4. Ibid pp. 109-110.

5. Ibid p. 145.

6. Ibid p. 165.

Congress remarks that the burden of the utterances of the leaders was "that the English people are essentially just and fair, and that if properly informed they would never deviate from truth and the right." What was really wrong was the Anglo-Indian system on the spot, and not the Englishman or the English nation. The English Constitution was the bulwark of popular liberties and the English Parliament was the Mother of democracy. An appeal to the British people, they thought, was necessarily to bear fruit.⁷ At the 12th Congress in 1896, Rahimatullah Sayani declared that "a more honest or sturdy nation does not exist under the Sun than this English Nation ; and there ought to be no doubt whatever as to the ultimate concession of our demands."⁸ At the Seventh Congress, Surendranath Bannerjee pointed out that India was not well-governed but "it is not the men who are to blame ; it is the system ; it is the bureaucracy, the autocratic despotism, that has been established, that must be arraigned before the bar of public opinion in India and throughout the civilized world."⁹ In 1911, when the Partition of Bengal was annulled by a Royal Proclamation, there was an outburst of loyalty in the ranks of the liberal leaders and Ambika Charan Mazumdar spoke with emotion :

"Gentlemen, on this day of universal rejoicing every heart in India in general and in Bengal in particular is beating in unison with reverence and devotion to the British Throne and overflowing with revived confidence and gratitude towards British Statesmanship Some of us never faltered—no, not even in the darkest days of our trials and tribulations—in our hope, in our conviction and in our faith in the ultimate triumph and vindication of British Justice".¹⁰

CONSTITUTIONALISM :—

Agitation on constitutional lines was the outstanding feature of the political movement in the early phase. Its leaders were averse to any step which would bring them in direct conflict with the established laws and the bureaucracy. They did not seek

7. Vol. I p. 60.

8. Anni Besant : How India Wrought for Freedom p. 232.

9. Ibid p. 124.

10. Ibid pp. 533-534.

a radical break from the past or subversion of the existing political order. They believed in the gradual evolution of Indian polity from its state of subjection to that of full self-government. They looked with horror on the prospect of violence and lawlessness creeping into public life at later stage. They detested anarchism and the cult of the bomb as stupidity and insanity. They also condemned the coercive legislation of the British Government, which gave "monstrous birth to the insane bomb-maker."¹¹ They preferred agitation by "the civilized peaceful weapon of moral force" to brute physical force.¹² They had profound, almost pathetic belief in the efficacy of moral pressure on the British authorities. At the Third Congress session at Madras, Madan Mohan Malaviya, a true representative of the liberal school, spoke on their technique of agitation in the following words :

*"And though thus far success has not crowned our efforts, we must only go up to government again and ask their earliest consideration of our demands, or of our prayers and entreat them, again and again, to concede to us this reform."*¹³

They did not fight shy of praying to the government for political concessions and reforms, believing sincerely that merely a lucid presentation of the case would serve the purpose. In justification of their loyalist and constitutional frame of mind, Dr. Pattabhi makes the correct observation :

"The times and conditions would not allow in the earlier years anything else than a reasoned appeal to the authorities for the redress of grievances and a moderate demand of new concessions and privileges. This frame of mind soon developed into an art. Forensic talent on the one hand and a richly imaginative and emotional eloquence on the other, were soon brought to bear on the task that lay before the Indian politicians. An irresistible statement of facts followed by irrebuttable arguments to prove the justice of the popular cause are to be met with everywhere in the speeches support-

11. Ibid p. 479.

12. Ibid p. 446.

*ing the Congress resolutions and the addresses delivered by Congress Presidents."*¹⁴

THE POLITICAL CREED :—

Most of the early patriots were, however, not content with piece-meal reforms and were impressed with the necessity of full self-government under the aegis of the British Crown. At the second Congress, Surendranath emphatically stated :

*"Self-Government is the ordering of nature, the will of Divine Providence. Every nation must be the arbiter of its own destinies—such is the omnipotent fiat inscribed by Nature with her own hands and in her own eternal book."*¹⁵

They believed that self-government was nothing new to the habits or ways of thought of the people of India, that free institutions were "the best practical school for mental and moral discipline."¹⁶ Without these, a robust national life was hardly possible. They also thought that the period of probation under the British was nearing completion, and India was getting ripe for full self-government. With all their limitations, they were sincere fighters for freedom and were inspired by true devotion to the country. They taught the country the cult of the liberty of the individual to regulate the State in the interests of his freedom. It would be erroneous to attribute their patriotism to their loyalty. It was the fruit of their sturdy commonsense and enlightened interest in the country. If they had contempt for the school of self-reliance, that was because they believed in the virtues of tolerance and compromise. With their width of vision and catholicity of mind, they refused to move in a narrow exclusive world of passion and blind faith. A few of them who took keen interest in the early Congress movement require special treatment.

DADABHAI NAOROJI.

A "simple but heroic life devoutly dedicated to the service of humanity"¹⁷—in these few words, R. P. Masani sums up the career of his hero, Dadabhai Naoroji, the Grand Old Man of India. No other man of his generation, it is true, exercised stronger fascina-

14. History of the Indian National Congress Vol. I, p. 60.

15. Annie Besant : How India Wrought for Freedom, p. 26.

16. Ibid p. 41

17. Dadabhai Naoroji—The Grand Old Man of India. Preface p. 11

tion over the mind of educated India. His whole life, with its calm dignity, its transparent sincerity and honesty, its rich contents and lofty intentions was an asset of inestimable value to the nation. Born of a Parsee priestly family in Bombay on 4 September, 1825, he lost his father at the tender age of ten. His mother spared no pains to get him the best of education available. As a student in the Elphinstone Institute, he had a brilliant academic career and Sir Erskine Perry, the Chief Justice of Bombay wanted him to qualify at the bar in England. But, for the conservatism of of his community, he was prevented from going abroad. In 1850, he, however, secured his appointment as Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy in the Elphinstone Institute—a distinction which no Indian had enjoyed so far. In 1856, he resigned from the post and proceeded to England to manage the business of the Parsee Firm, Camo & Co. of which he was a partner. In 1876, he accepted the Dewanship of the Baroda State but he could not continue there for long owing to his differences with the British Resident, Col. Phayre. Business and politics engrossed his time in the later period till his death at Bombay on June 30, 1917 amidst the regrets of the whole nation.

His life covered a very wide range of activity. He was the inspiration of public life in the Bombay Presidency in the sixties of last century. He founded various papers and "no fewer than thirty institutions, most of which had for their object the political advancement of the country, but some concerned themselves with social reform, in particular the education and emancipation of women."¹⁸ In 1866, he founded the East Indian Association in England to educate British public on Indian questions. He was also connected with the foundation of the Indian National Congress. He was the first Indian to be elected to the Parliament where he pleaded the cause of his country in a spirited manner. He was convinced that self-government was the only remedy for India and he advocated India's direct representation in the Parliament. In his writings, he analysed with facts and figures the causes of India's poverty and vividly exposed British policies. In his evidence before the Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure under the Chairmanship of Lord Welby, he denounced the Imperial System. It was, in his opinion, deple-

nishing and enfeebling the country materially. British rule in India was misrule of India, said he, and lacked British principles. For the security India enjoyed under foreign rule, she paid heavily in terms of the starvation and death of her millions. He said :

*"What is secure, and well secure, is that England is perfectly safe and secure, and does so with perfect security, to carry away from India, and to eat up in India, her property at the present rate of some £ 30,000,000 or £ 40,000,000 a year."*¹⁹

He was a sincere worker of the Congress and his presence gave to its movement dignity and weight. To it he taught the *mantrams* of Swadeshi and Swaraj and guided its steps on the road of constitutional agitation. His life, said Gokhale, was "one of the most perfect examples of the highest type of patriotism." He undoubtedly attained "in the hearts of millions of his countrymen, without distinction of race or creed, a place which rulers of men might envy, and which in this character is more like the influence which great teachers of humanity have exercised on those whose thoughts and hopes and lives they have lifted to a higher plane."²⁰

SURENDRANATH BANNERJEA (SIR).

In the eighties of the 19th century, no other man in India was as popular and well-known as Babu Surendranath of Bengal. Sir Henry Cotton wrote about him :

*"The educated classes are the voice and brain of the country. The Bengales Babus now rule public opinion from Peshawar to Chittagong;.....and at the present moment the name of Surendra Nath Bannerjea excites as much enthusiasm among the rising generation of Multan as in Dacca."*²¹

If any one deserves the title of the father of nationalist agitation, it is unmistakably Surendranath Banerjea. He came of a Kulin Brahmin family and his father was one of the distinguished medical practitioners of his time. After his B. A. degree, he successfully competed at the Indian Civil Service Examination

19. Masani, R. P. : Dadabhai Naoroji, p. 209.

20. Eminent Parsoes, G. A. Natesan & Co. Madras Publication p. 103,

21. New India, p. 28.

of 1868 in England. His official career was, however, brief and marked by disappointments. Owing to the unsympathetic attitude of the British officialdom, he was dismissed on a slight offence and was even refused enrolment at the English bar. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar got him an appointment as a Professor of English in the Metropolitan Institute at Calcutta. From 1875 onwards, he was connected with education, journalism and politics, and in a short period emerged as a leading nationalist leader. He founded the Ripon College, now named after him and moulded public opinion through the 'Bengalee', which he edited with great distinction. In 1883, his prosecution in a case of the contempt of court evoked public excitement and wide demonstrations of sympathy. During 1880-85, he succeeded in tutoring the middle-class intelligentsia in the art of organised political agitation. In the later period, he was an active worker of the Congress and established his position as one of its eminent leaders. He visited England many times and his rare gifts of oratory and command of the English language created profound impression over the British public. He came to be known as an Indian Gladstone.²² In 1892, he was elected to the Imperial Legislative Council, and he presided over the Poona Congress of 1895. During the Boycott and Swadeshi movements in the period after the partition of Bengal, he was a very popular figure and also experienced the Police lathi-charges. By that time he had reached the zenith of his career in the estimate of the nation. His later career recorded steady decline and municipal and ministerial work mostly engaged his attention. He breathed his last on 6th, August 1925.

His fifty years of strenuous public life after 1875 entitle him to a high place among the makers of modern India. His influence over the moderate elements of Indian nationalism was tremendous. It was he who persuaded them to accept the Montagu Chelms-

22. He went to England for the second time in 1909 to attend the Imperial Press Conference and addressed various meetings. The care-taker of the Manchester Town Hall, where he addressed a crowded meeting, quietly told him when the function was over : "Will you, sir, write down your name in this book ? And as I was writing he said to me, 'Sir, let me tell you this, that such a speech has not been delivered in this hall since it was built.'—A Nation in Making p. 267.

ford Reforms of 1919, and organised the All-India Liberal Federation. The most remarkable feature of his public life was his steady adherence to the path of constitutionalism, even when he had suffered much at the hands of the bureaucracy. His was a gentle soul free from passion and bitterness and his life "a noble one, instinct with noble lessons."²³

GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE.

Few life-sketches of India's early nation builders make so inspiring and noble appeal as that of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. His whole career was a plain story of true devotion to his fallen country. He came of an ancient Brahmin Maratha stock and was born on May 9, 1866 in a village of Ratnagiri district of the Bombay Presidency. When he was about thirteen years old, his father died and the entire burden of the family fell on the slender shoulders of his elder brother, who had to leave his education and accept a petty job. Gokhale the younger had to struggle hard for completing his education and

*"On some occasions he had even to forego one of his meals each day, in order to bring down his monthly bill in the hostel in which he lived. On other occasions he was compelled to economise by studying at night by the light of street lamps, in order to save oil. He was also obliged to do his own cooking for a time, in order to reduce his expenditure yet further, even though this involved the loss of much valuable time from his studies."*²⁴

Renouncing all ambition 'to roll in riches and drive in carriages', he chose a life of privation and sacrifice. He took up an assistant mastership in an English School at Poona, founded under the auspices of the Deccan Education Society. It developed into the famous Fergusson College and he retired as its Principal in 1902. A more conscientious, painstaking, and intellectually gifted worker this institution has not seen since he left his connection with it. Early in his service here, he came in contact with Ranade, 'the uncrowned King of Poona', who was once a fellow-student with his father at Kolahpur. The astute old man was impressed by his brilliance and tenacity of purpose and made

23. A. O. Hume, cited in Appendix, A. Ibid p. 409.

24. Hoyland, I. S. : G. K. Gokhale p. 4.

him one of the Secretaries of the Sarvajanic Sabha, the chief Political Association of the Presidency. His work as a teacher, journalist and public worker soon won him an eminent place in the public life of the province. At an early age of thirty-one, he was selected by the Deccan Sabha to represent its views before the Welby Commission in England. His arguments in favour of the Indianisation of the services and the reduction of military expenditure overwhelmed the Commission, and more so his declaration :

*"The full height to which our manhood is capable of rising can never be reached by us under the present system. The moral elevation which every self-governing people feel, cannot be felt by us. Our administrative and military talents must gradually disappear owing to sheer disuse, till at last our lot, as hewers of wood and drawers of water in our own country, is stereotyped."*²⁵

In 1899, he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Council as representative of the Municipalities of the Central Division of the Bombay Presidency. Here he resolutely opposed the Land Alienation Bill of the Government. In 1902, he took his seat as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council and was pitted against the imperious autocratic Lord Curzon. His budget-speeches, as almost the only leader of opposition, remain unsurpassed to this day for rare insight into the knotty problems of administration. Lord Curzon was impressed by him and wrote to him :

*"God has endowed you with extraordinary abilities, and you have placed them unreservedly at the disposal of your country"*²⁶

In 1905, he was elected as the President of the Banaras Congress, when he was only thirty nine years in age and he delivered a speech which ranks as one of the great speeches delivered from the Congress platform. During 1905-1907, he pleaded vigorously for the unity of the nationalist rank and file and raised strong voice against the reactionary policies of the government. He welcomed the Minto-Morley Reforms as saving India "from drifting towards what cannot be described by any other name than chaos. For, however strong a government may be, repression never can put

25. Ibid p. 51.

26. Cited in Chintamani, C. Y. : Indian Politics Since the Mutiny p. 40.

down the aspirations of a people and never will."²⁷ The most abiding monument to his memory is the Servants of India Society which he founded in 1905. Its object was to train missionaries in the cause of national service. It aimed at building up a high type of character, and promoting by constitutional means the interests of the country. The society represents the highest aspirations of the master and embodies all that is high and noble in our public life. It has undoubtedly lived upto its ideals. The disabilities of Indians, the sufferings of the indentured Indian labour in the inhospitable wilds of South Africa also oppressed him. The last few years of his life, he devoted to their cause. On February 19, 1915, he breathed his last, comforting the comrades by his side with the words:

*"This side of life has been good to me. It is time that I should go and see the other."*²⁸

With his death, disappeared an institution of India's public life,—an institution of wisdom and statesmanship, of morality and patriotism. While he lived his critics stigmatised him as a faint-hearted moderate and ridiculed his cautious line of political conduct. His great weakness was that he was not an opportunist and could not play the demagogue. He did not care to win the applause of the mob. He was a rationalist in politics and appealed to the intellect of the people. He was far above the common rut of politicians and agitators and disappointed both his country-men and the bureaucracy. Lord Minto was angry at him as he could not control sedition in the Congress ranks. Lord Morley, the Secretary of State, considered him a baby "as a party manager" and wrote to Minto :

*"A party-manager, or for that matter any politician aspiring to be a leader, should never whine. Gokhale is always winning, just like the second-rate Irishmen between Dan O' Connell and Parnell,"*²⁹

His political opponents, however, recognised his genius and ability. At his death, Bal Gangadhar Tilak spoke of him as "the diamond of India, the jewel of Maharashtra, and the prince

27. Hoyland, J. S. : G. K. Gokhale p. 159.

28. Ibid p. 185.

29. Marv : India, Minto and Morley 1905-1910 p. 161.

of workers',³⁰ who rose to eminence by sheer force of integrity and intellect. According to Lajpat Rai, he was "the noblest and the best of the Congress type from the nationalist point of view." His patriotism was of the highest type,

*"Yet he was not the type of man fitted to be a hero.....He had the qualities of statesmanship, but lacked those of generalship."*³¹

Gokhale objected to people designating his policy as one of mendicancy. He stood for the best and practical in politics and said :

*"We are not beggars and our policy is not that of mendicancy. We are ambassadors of our people at a foreign court, to watch and guard the interests of our country and get as much for her as we can. That is our position."*³²

Few personalities of Indian politics can claim greater intellectual equipment than that of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. He remains the best representative of the nationalist movement in the early phase.

30. Writings and Speeches : pp. 348-351.

31. Young India : p. 217.

PART II

THE PERIOD OF THE RISE AND GROWTH OF EXTREMISM AND MILITANT NATIONALISM. (1900—1919).

"Do you suffer ? do you feel
Degradation ? Undismayed
Face and grapple with your wrong !
By themselves are nations made."

Old Man's Hope : A. O. Hume.

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"There are higher powers that rule the destiny of things and it may be the will of Providence that the cause I represent may prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free."

Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

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"Men of wealth and men of means have nowhere led the revolutionary or the political movements in the history of freedom in this world of ours."

Lajpat Rai : Young India.

CHAPTER V

RISE OF EXTREMISM AND MILITANT NATIONALISM. (1900—1912).

Influences leading to the growth of Extremism—Progress of Extremist agitation in the period of Curzon and Minto—The Boycott and Swadeshi movement—The Revolutionary Movement—Failure of the Revolutionary Movement

At the beginning of the 20th century the nationalist agitation began to acquire new energy and consciousness. Political agitation now developed on extremist lines. The extremist sections of Indian nationalism began to decry the ideology of the moderates and their adoration of the West. The more militant among them were uncompromising in their hostility to the foreigner and condemned everything connected with him, his institutions, his ethics and his philosophy. Indian nationalism in this phase reflects the antithesis between the East and the West which was inevitable after their intimate contact in the preceding period revealed sharp racial and cultural differences between the two civilizations. The hostility between the two was sharpened by various influences which we shall analyse below.

NEW INDIA OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY—

With the dawn of the 20th century, India entered a new era of her industrial history. The new India of modern industry and commerce was coming into view and adopting a defiant attitude towards the pretensions of European capitalism. The movement in favour of national industries, which was slowly working its way in the previous period, now became quite vigorous. The Congress extended its whole-hearted sympathy to the movement. In 1896, the first Swadeshi exhibition was organised at Calcutta, the capital of India then and the dumping ground of foreign capitalism. In 1906, a similar exhibition was organised at Calcutta at the time of the Congress Session on a much more impressive scale. After 1904, the industrial conferences became a usual feature of the Congress movement. The results of the industrial movement too were not insignificant. Between 1900-1906, banking capital increased

by sixty lacs of rupees, and Swadeshi movement brought fifteen banks into existence with a capital of four crores of rupees. In 1906, the industrial companies in India were working with a "paid-up capital amounting to 556 lacs of rupees above what it was in 1900".¹ In his speech on the Indian Budget of 1911, Montagu, the Under-Secretary of State, gave the following facts which give us an idea of India's progress on the lines of capitalised industry and over-seas commerce during the period :

*"Twenty years ago there were 126 cotton mills, employing 112,000 hands ; there are now 232 mills, employing 236,000. In the same time the number of Jute mills has exactly doubled, and the persons employed in them increased from 61,000 to 192,000. Altogether there are now about 2500 factories of all kinds worked by mechanical power, employing nearly a million persons."*²

There was steady increase of the tea industry and mineral production. Messrs Tata & Co's undertaking for steel production was also nearing completion. By 1911, the wage-earning class employed in the railways, factories, tea-estates, mining etc. numbered about two and a quarter million. The Indian capital was also overcoming its shyness and was available for financing large industrial enterprises :

*"As regards the growth of capitalism, there are 2156 Companies registered in India with a nominal capital of £ 70,000,000 and a paid-up capital of £ 40,000,000. These figures have been doubled in ten years. Again, the banking capital of India has increased in ten years from £ 20,000,000, to £ 43,000,000. Deposits have risen from £ 20,000,000 to £ 43,000,000. This of course means so much increase in the capital available for financing commercial and industrial operations."*³

TORY MISRULE :—

During this period, the non-official Indian opinion came into sharp conflict with the ways of the bureaucracy and the extreme type of nationalism was a retaliation against Tory misrule. Already at the eleventh session of the Congress in 1892, Gokhale issued a warning to the government of Lord

1. Mac Donald : The Awakening of India p 82.

2. Montagu E. S : On Indian Affairs pp. 98-100.

3. Ibid.

Lansdowne (1888—1894), that its reactionary policies towards education, local self-government and the employment of Indians in public services were an invitation to danger. The report of the Indian Public Services Commission of 1888 also did not do justice to the claims of Indians for employment in the higher grades of public services. In the opinion of Gokhale, it put Indians in a worse position than they were before. The Provincial Service created by the Commission for Indians only was not considered an adequate compensation for the discrimination against them in the Imperial Services⁴. In 1894, the government lowered the duty on foreign imports of cotton to 3½% at the representation of the Lancashire Mill-owners. It also imposed a counter-vailing excise duty on Indian manufactures. The Congress emphatically protested against "the injustice and impolicy of imposing excise-duty on cotton manufactured in British India". It was convinced that "in proposing the excise the interests of India have been sacrificed to those of Lancashire".⁵ During the Viceroyalty of Lord Elgin (1894-98) the bureaucracy had free hand and adopted strong measures of repression and coercion. He confessed to Ananda Charlu that he was totally ignorant about India and had to rely solely on his advisers.⁶ The arbitrary detention of Natu Brothers, prominent landlords of the Deccan, and the prosecution of Tilak made it plain that the British government was dwarfing the progress of India. At the Congress Session of 1898 at Madras, R. C. Dutt said that he could hardly remember any time "when the confidence of the people of India in the justice and fair play of English rulers was so shaken, as it has been within the last two years".⁷ In 1896, the year of the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen's reign, the Engineering College of Roorkee was closed to Asiatics of pure descent domiciled in India. Ananda Mohan Bose, President of the Congress in 1898, was surprised at the fact that Asiatics of impure descent were not excluded and that to give privileges to illegitimacy was peculiar to the Government of India.⁸ In the period of Lord Curzon, the

4. Anni Besant, *How India Wrought for Freedom*, p. p. 146—147.

5. *Ibid* p. 197

6. Chintamani, C. Y., *Indian Politics Since the Mutiny* p. 28

7. Annie Besant, p. 27.

8. *Ibid* p. 272

storm actually burst owing to his various acts of blazing indiscretion. He assumed the reins of office with full confidence that he would assist the Congress in its peaceful demise. His Official Secrets Bill, which did not require prosecution to produce evidence against the guilty but required the accused to prove his innocence, "a reversal of all civilized jurisprudence", was a bomb-shell. His Delhi Durbar, celebrated at a ruinous cost at a time, "when Famine and Pestilence was stalking over the land," in spite of the unanimous protests of the press and the public was seriously resented as "a pompous pageant to a starving population".⁹ His Indian Universities Act of 1904, aiming at the official control of higher education, was considered as an effective instrument for the enslavement of national interests. His officialisation of the Calcutta Corporation was highly injurious to the cause of local self-government. His remarks against Indian character offended the educated people and Surendranath retorted :

*"Are we the representatives of an inferior race, from whose shores, forsooth, went forth those missionaries who have converted two thirds of the human race into moral superiority."*¹⁰

The Partition of Bengal in 1905, however, set the Ganges on fire and Bengal felt that it had been "insulted, humiliated and tricked."¹¹ At the Kashi Congress of 1905, Gokhale pronounced a scathing verdict on Lord Curzon's administration :

*"For a parallel to such an administration, we must, I think, go back to the times of Aurangzeb in the history of our own country.....I think even the most devoted admirer of Lord Curzon cannot claim that he has strengthened the foundations of British rule in India."*¹²

The Hindu mind was particularly annoyed at the game of the bureaucracy in exciting the Muslims against the Congress. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's efforts at starting anti-patriotic associations as a counter-blast to the Congress movement seriously provoked the Hindu intelligentsia. Its disaffected elements veered towards religious nationalism.

9. Ibid p, 377

10. Ibid p. 398.

11. Surendranath : A Nation in Making p. 187.

12. Annie Besant, p. 417

ECONOMIC DISCONTENT OF THE LOWER CLASSES :—

"Much poverty and much discontent," Lord Bacon had observed, "prepared the ground in which revolutions germinate." Towards the close of the 19th century, there was all-round economic depression and the lower middle-classes were facing acute unemployment and scarcity of occupations. Famines, epidemics, earthquakes caused much distress among the masses. The discontent of the growing educated classes and the distress of the masses were attributed to foreign rule, and produced a ferment of anti-British feeling. The writings of Dadabhai Naoroji, "Poverty and un-British rule in India," books by Romesh Dutt, "Economic History of British India," and William Digby, "Prosperous India," in the opinion of Pandit Jawaharlal, "played a revolutionary role in the development of our nationalist thought." In spite of their moderate outlook, they gave "a political and economic foundation to our nationalism."¹³

In respect of middle-class unemployment, Bengal was the worst sufferer. Its *bhadralok*, composed mostly of the literate castes of Brahmans, Kayasthas, and Vaishyas, had risen high in state patronage all over Northern India. They were the first with the Parsees to send their sons abroad to qualify for civil and medical appointments in the higher grades. With the growth of education in other provinces, the field for their enterprise shrank. In their own province, there was not much of scope for the large numbers coming out of the English schools and colleges every year. The commercial and industrial interests which they neglected passed into the hands of either foreigners or people from other provinces. With the pressure of population ever on the increase, connection with land was also not remunerative. The rise in the cost of living in the first decade of the 20th century naturally hit hard the middle-class of Bengal. The authors of the Indian Sedition Committee Report of 1918 are of opinion that the economic discontent of the *bhadraloks*, "for centuries peaceful and unwarlike," was responsible for the intensity of nationalist feeling in that province.¹⁴

HINDU REVIVALISM :—

With growing unemployment, there was also a sense of frustration among the educated classes at the acquisition of

¹³. Autobiography : p. 426.

¹⁴. See pages 15-16.

Western learning and culture. Moreover, researches on Indian history by European and Indian scholars revealed brilliant civilized periods in the remote past and provoked a reaction against foreign rule and culture. The Hindu mind sought relief in religious nationalism, "in the thought that atleast in the sphere of religion and philosophy we were second to none."¹⁵ The propaganda of the various religious associations like the Arya Samaj, Theosophical Society, Ram Krishna Mission turned the popular imagination back to the glories of the past. Leaders like Swami Vivekanand inspired hope in India's genius to work out its own salvation. There was a new awakening in Indian life, and its most striking manifestation was the development of nationalist literature. The emotional soul of Bengal especially reacted violently against the domination of the West. It produced a new hymnology and literature characterized by high pitch of patriotic feeling. It now idealized India, and translated "nationalism into religion, into music and poetry, into painting and literature." It created India by "song and worship" and clothed her "in queenly garments."¹⁶ The Bande-Mataram, the famous song from Bankim's Anand-Math, which was formerly an "airy and fairy sentiment", now became an "inspiration, a revelation, a truth."¹⁷ The reaction against the West, working on the Indian temperament, "emotional, mentally agile, sensitive to ideas rather than to the hard facts of experience, the exuberant product of a sun-soaked atmosphere", writes Ronaldshay, acquired "an unreasoning violence." Indian nationalism now, in his opinion, suffered from "strange historical aberrations", and indulged in uncritical panegyrics of the past. He writes :

*" Word pictures of a golden age of peace and plenty before the advent of the British have become so common a property in the nationalist orator's rhetorical stock-in-trade."*¹⁸

FOREIGN INFLUENCES :—

The feeling of suspicion and resentment against the foreigner was shared throughout the colonial world. It was especially intense in Africa and Asia menaced by European Imperialism

15. Nehru, J. : Autobiography p. 426.

16. Mac Donald : The Awakening of India p. 49.

17. Pal, B. C. : The New Spirit p. 28, 71.

18. The Heart of Aryavarta p. IX.

and colour consciousness. Certain events, however, shattered the feeling of inferiority and helplessness among the subject races and their nationalism acquired a militant and aggressive outlook. In 1894, the Abyssinian army defeated the Italian invader and young India began to shake its dread of the military strength of the foreigner. The movements of liberation in Egypt, Persia, Turkey, Russia further stimulated the Indian mind. Sir Henry Cotton writes how the new impulses of freedom agitating the world struck the chord of India's national life. The rapid rise of Japan and the crushing defeats it inflicted on the Tsarist Russia in 1904 made a tremendous impression upon her. He writes :

*"Above all there is Japan. What an inspiration has been afforded by the character of these Eastern Islanders ! What an example have they not set to the East of the power of a patriotic spirit ! The example is not lost on India..... An alien government, however, well intentioned, cannot accomplish during many generations what national government has done in the space of less than forty years."*¹⁹

The victory of Japan over Russia, says Fisher, "thrilled the entire Orient with a new hope and ambition". It was "a tonic to Oriental pride" and "the most potent sort of stimulus to Indian nationalism, following as it did the seven years of smarting under Lord Curzon's regime".²⁰ Pradhan informs us that the educated classes, particularly the young student world began to enquire into the causes which made Japan so great and powerful. Its resistance against Russian aggression was attributed to her "unique patriotism" and "spirit of self-sacrifice and nationality". He further observes :

*"These virtues, it was thought could work miracles, and enable even a subject and disarmed country like India to free herself from the crushing bondage of England."*²¹

With this jubilation and excitement over the assertion of Asia against Europe, grew up the sentiment of Asian solidarity.

19. New India p. 14. On Jan. 1. 1905, Russia surrendered Port-Arthur to Japan with 25,000 prisoners and thirty war-ships sunk in the Pacific. Japan was acclaimed as Asia's leader.

20. Fisher, F.B. : India's Silent Revolution p. 27.

21. Pradhan, R.G. : India Struggle for Swaraj p. 75.

Asia struggled hard against "the levelling influences of the West", and refused "to lose her individuality and become either a copy or a duplicate of the West". It was also inspired by a new consciousness of unity,

*"That even at the present moment there is a fundamental unity between India, China and Japan, and that the Western influences over these countries have not yet advanced sufficiently to destroy that unity."*²²

TREATMENT OF INDIANS ABROAD :—

The treatment of Indians abroad, particularly in the British colonies of South Africa, was a painful experience to India. Lajpat Rai writes how outside India, the Indian

*"carries the badge of political subjection with him. The British colonies, more than any other country, bang their doors on him. He is a pariah all over the world."*²³

Valentine Chirol, special correspondent of the London 'Times', who visited India during the Viceroyalty of Lord Minto admits that :

*"Much bad blood has undoubtedly been created by the treatment of British Indians in South Africa and the attitude in British colonies generally towards Asiatic immigrants."*²⁴

In 1894, Indians were deprived of franchise in Natal and in 1897, a new law forced them to choose between "perpetual bondage and an odious poll-tax."²⁵ They were subjected to severe hardships and restrictions in almost all the colonies. In the Transvaal Republic, they were shut up in marked locations amidst dung-heaps, and elsewhere they could not walk on foot-paths even. In 1906, the government of the Transvaal introduced a bill which required every Indian to be registered by finger-print like criminals. He was to produce the certificate of registration upon demand by any police officer. It was then that the Indian community under the leadership of M. K. Gandhi started the passive resistance movement for the repeal of this

22. Lajpat Rai quoted in Kohn. H : History of Nationalism in the East p. 172.

23. Young India : pp. 80-81.

24. Indian Unrest : p. 3.

25. Annie Besant p. 279.

law. India felt aggrieved at the systematic persecution of her people, by whose hard toil was built up the prosperity and grandeur of these settlements.

PROGRESS OF EXTREMIST AGITATION :—

The revolutionary atmosphere at the opening of the twentieth century was the result of all these influences working on Indian life. There was the growth of nationalist agitation under the direction of two schools of thought—the Extremists and the Revolutionaries. The difference between the two was one of method only. The Extremist School believed in effective political agitation and national reconstruction, and the revolutionaries pinned their faith in terrorism and insurrection. Each school carried out its programme independently. Terrorism, however, did not find favour with the enlightened sections of society.

The extremist agitation originated with the Deccan famines of 1896–97, described by Sir Lovat Fraser in his studies on Lord Curzon, as “the most intense and severe famines ever then known under the British rule.”^{25(a)} The government relief measures were very ineffective in preventing deaths by starvation. While people were dying like flees, to use the words of the subsequent Famine Commission, the Government of Lord Elgin embarked on costly and extensive transfrontier military operations. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the popular leader of Maharashtra, organised a no-tax campaign among the peasantry of the Deccan. He also organised a corps of volunteers to go round and explain the clauses of the Famine Relief Code. He exhorted the people not to kill themselves by timidity or starvation and not to sell their things to pay the revenue. He conducted his propaganda through his paper, the ‘Kesari’ at Poona, which was very popular with the lower middle-classes who had intimate contact with the masses.

The earthquake and the bubonic plague in 1897 further intensified the hardships of the people. The Government enforced various sanitary measures through a British regiment at Poona and the high-handedness of the soldiers annoyed the people. On the day of the Diamond Jubilee of Victoria, the 22nd June, two young men shot Mr. Rand, the unpopular Plague Commissioner, and

25 (a) Cited in Singh, G. N. : Landmarks in Indian Constitutional and National Development p. 272.

Lieut. Amerst of the British regiment. The government suspected conspiracy for its overthrow and deported the Natu Brothers who had no hand in the murder. Their only fault was that they were supporters of Tilak. Tilak was also sentenced to eighteen months rigorous imprisonment although the charge of conspiracy against him could not be substantiated. With the martyrdom of Tilak, extremist agitation struck root in the soil. At the 13th Congress session, Surendranath spoke on his arrest that a "Nation is in tears".²⁶ The repressive measures of the government further fanned the flame of popular unrest. At his retirement Lord Elgin too made the silly declaration in his speech to the United Services Club of Simla that "India was conquered by the sword and by the sword it shall be held."²⁷ In 1898, Bengal was pathetically stirred at the murderous assault by three drunken European soldiers on Dr. Suresh Chandra Sircar, a medical practitioner of Barrackpur. The Indian opinion was all the more shocked when the Special Jury, most of whom were Europeans of the Calcutta High Court acquitted the culprits on charge of murder and found them guilty only of grievous hurt. In the period of Lord Curzon, Bengal became the hot-bed of extremist agitation.

THE BOYCOTT AND SWADESHI MOVEMENT : —

In 1905, after various reactionary measures, Lord Curzon decided to redistribute the territories of the Bengal province. On the plea of administrative convenience and efficiency, he carved two different provinces out of it. The Eastern districts of Bengal belonging to the Dacca, Chittagoong and Rajshahi divisions were amalgamated with the Brahmaputra and Surma valley districts of Assam to form the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The remaining districts with the whole of Bihar and Orissa continued under the old name of Bengal. This measure agonised the whole of Bengal and deeply stirred national feelings. It was manifestly a Macchiavellian measure. It was intended to break the solidarity of the Bengalee race and encourage rift between the two communities. It was "part and parcel of Lord Curzon's policy to enfeeble the growing power and destroy the political tendencies of a patriotic spirit."²⁸ Moreover, it was

26. Annie Besant, p. 259.

27. Chintamani, C. Y : p. 28.

28. Cotton, H : New India pp. 11-12.

"enforced with a degree of harshness and want of sympathy which are fortunately rare in the annals of Indian administration."²⁹ The successful boycott of the American goods which the Chinese were conducting at this time appealed to Bengal at this critical juncture of her history. It appealed to both schools of political thought, the Extremists and the Moderates, as a successful weapon of protest. It appealed to the bourgeoisie which saw in it the prospect of industrial revival. The Swadeshi Movement became the symbol of resistance and nation's voluntary protection to its infant industries.

The 16th of October, 1905 was observed throughout Bengal as a day of fasting and mourning, as on this day the partition was effected. The streets of towns and cities echoed from the early dawn the cries of Bande-Mataram and bands after bands wended their way to the river-side, stopping only to tie the Rakhis on each other's wrists. The Sankirtan Parties chanted songs and inspired the surging mass of humanity with noble patriotism. Then followed the movement of the boycott of foreign goods, beginning with the organisation of meetings all over the province and outside. The response of the people was spontaneous and repression converted the movement into a potential force. Even priests declined to officiate at ceremonies where foreign stuff was intended as an oblation to the gods. The students were the most enthusiastic workers of the movement. They arranged bonfires of the foreign stuff and picketting of shops. The indiscriminate prosecution of school lads and the Bande-Mataram circular, banning the recital of the song in the streets served only to intensify the agitation. Surendranath writes :

*"The months that followed the 16th October 1905, were months of great excitement and unrest. The policy of the government, especially that of East Bengal under Sir Bamfylde Fuller, added to the tension of the situation. He declared, half in jest, half in seriousness, to the amazement of all sober-minded men, that he had two wives, Hindu and Mohammedan, but that the Mohammedan was the favourite wife."*³⁰

29, Ibid p. 7.

30. A Nation in Making p. 218.

During the years 1906-07, the boycott movement gathered momentum owing to the repressive measures of the government. The liberal party which was in power too lent its full support to repression. On Feb. 26, 1906, in a speech in the Parliament, Lord Morley, the Secretary of State admitted that the partition was an "administrative operation which went wholly and decisively against the wishes of most of the people concerned." But the redistribution of Bengal, he said, was "now a settled fact."³¹ Repression invested the movement with a religious and revolutionary flavour. The resolve to abstain from foreign goods became a solemn religious vow, and it was on the lips of every Bengali. The Swadeshi vow ran as under :

*"Invoking God Almighty to be our witness, and standing in the presence of after generations, we take this solemn vow that, so far as practicable, we shall use home made articles and abstain from the use of foreign articles. So God help us."*³²

The forceful dispersal of the Provincial Conference at Barisal in April 1906, the unprovoked police assault on the delegates, "created a sense of indignation among the educated community not only in Bengal but also outside our province."³³ It was a conference of both Hindu and Muslim leaders under the Presidentship of A. Rasool, a graduate of Oxford University and a member of the Calcutta High Court Bar. He "regarded the partition as a national calamity",³⁴ even when Eastern Bengal was openly advertised as a Muslim province. The movement now began to rage with 'cyclonic force.' It was also extended to the realm of education. Foreign education was considered a malady afflicting the soul of the nation and was to be replaced by national education. A National Council of Education was formed with members like Sir Gurudas Banerji, Dr. Rashbehari Ghosh, Rabindranath Tagore, B. C. Pal, C. R. Das etc. Raja Subodh Chandra Mallik contributed one lac of rupees towards the funds for starting public schools and colleges. The National Council reduced English to the status of a secondary language.

31. Speeches on Indian Affairs : pp. 107-108.

32. A Nation in Making p. 228.

33. Ibid p. 231.

34. Ibid.

In respect of private enterprise in nation-building activities, writes Lajpat Rai, Bengal "had been rather backward", and the partition gave stimulus to them.³⁵

The Swadeshi movement marked the birth of a new era in Indian political life. The nation learnt that the only effective guarantee against misrule is the vigorous assertion of its will. It was also the fore-runner of the non-cooperation movement of the later period. It was quite effective as it carried with it a message of material prosperity to the people. It also provided an opportunity of constructive political work, the uplift of the masses and their association with public movements. It had come, writes Ronaldshay, "like a tempest; it had rushed along impetuously like some mighty flood, submerging them (Bengal), sweeping them off their feet, but revitalising their lives."³⁶

THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT :—

The last years of Lord Minto's Viceroyalty (1905-1910) also saw the birth of the revolutionary movement. Throughout the period (1908-1917), terroristic organisations continued to function and political assassinations continued to take place. It was only after the unsettlement of the partition at the special Durbar on Dec. 12, 1911 in the time of Lord Hardinge that much of tension subsided in public life.

Various explanations have been offered for the growth of the revolutionary movement. According to Sir Valentine Chirol, it was inspired by the forces of orthodox Hinduism and was essentially a Brahmanical reaction against the West. He writes that the secret societies preaching the cult of violence derived their inspiration from religion and that :

*"Hand in hand with this campaign for the glorification of Hinduism at the expense of western civilization there has been carried on another and far more insidious campaign for the vilification of everything British".*³⁷

Brahmanism, he writes, was "fiercely militant" in the Deccan, and that Tilak "was the triumphant champion of Hindu orthodoxy, the high-priest of Ganesh, the inspired prophet of a new national-

35. Young India p. 165.

36. The Heart of Aryavarta p. 99.

37. Indian Unrest : pp. 30-31.

ism, which in the name of Shivaji would cast out the hated *mlecchas* and restore the glories of Mahratha history".³⁹ There is no doubt that the revolutionary movement derived its inspiration from religion. But, as Garrat points out, there is little to suggest that it was the "result of a deliberate conspiracy on the part of the orthodox Hindu leaders to recapture the supremacy which they had lost owing to British rule". The leaders of the movement in Bengal and the Punjab were also non-Brahmins.⁴⁰

According to Lajpat Rai, the movement spread under the inspiration of liberty, "spread like wild fire and assumed wide proportions." It captured the imagination of the youth who met death like martyrs with no hope of reward or recognition. The failure of the Congress, in his opinion, evolved the revolutionary movement. He writes:

*"Almost all are anti-Congress. Even those who are not Nationalists do not like the Congress and feel no obligation towards it, because the Congress failed to communicate high principles and lay down high ideals, and because it failed to create that spirit of self-sacrifice, that willingness to suffer, without which no national movement can grow, prosper, and inspire."*⁴¹

The Congress methods of praying, petitioning and protesting were undoubtedly not relished by ardent, hot-headed patriots. To them the Congress appeared as a counter-revolutionary organisation as it was not prepared to lead even the boycott movement which was on non-violent lines. After the Surat split of Dec. 1907, this organisation passed completely under the control of the moderates and the extremists politicians parted company with them. A few months after, almost all eminent advocates of extremists were seized and put inside the prisons. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was for the second time arrested on June 24, 1908 in connection with his "inflammatory" articles published in the 'Kesari' and was deported to Mandalay in Burma for six years. There were serious riots in Bombay after his trial and they "assumed at times a very threatening character."⁴²

38. Ibid p. 37.

39. Ibid p. 47.

40. An Indian Commentary pp. 123-124.

41. Young India. p. 154

42. Chitrol : Indian Unrest p. 56.

It would, however, be more appropriate to consider the revolutionary movement as the upshot of the reactionary and repressive policies of the government. It was alarmed at the manifestations of extremist activity and followed the policy of "the relentless application of the knife."⁴³ The Under-Secretary of State, Mr. Montagu confessed in 1910 that :

*"The policy of persecution under the Penal Code has been given a thorough trial during the last three years : its result has been to make martyrs of misguided and insignificant youths ; to advertise sedition ; and to enhance the circulation of offending newspapers."*⁴⁴

The bulk of enlightened public opinion held similar opinion. The barbarous legislation of the government to control sedition, brutal repression of even legitimate expressions of patriotism, converted "prison-houses into martyrdoms."⁴⁵ We shall briefly dwell on the movement in the different parts of the country and abroad.

BENGAL.

Bengal was the centre of revolutionary politics. Here the extremist press assumed a militant nationalist tone, and the 'Yugantar' openly preached the gospel of revolution. It was founded in 1906 by Barendra Kumar Ghosh, the younger brother of Arabindo Ghosh, and Bhupendranath Dutt, brother of Swami Vivekanand. Its circulation soon rose to over 50,000, "a figure, never attained before by any Indian newspaper."⁴⁶ The 'Sandhya,' the 'Nava-Sakti' and other like papers also became very popular. The revolutionary atmosphere was further electrified by patriotic songs and literature. The writings of Arabindo were a powerful inspiration to young Bengal. They revealed "a divining intention of the spirit of liberty, the beating of whose wings were being heard over Asia." They were "a heartening call to his countrymen to save the Motherland." They were an appeal to their manhood "to reinstate her in the greatness that was hers :"

*"Had she not once been the High-Priestess of the Orient?
Had not her civilization left its ripple-mark on the*

43. Montagu, E. S. : On Indian Affair p. 276.

44. Ibid pp. 36-37.

45. Annie Besant : pp. 479-480.

46. Chitrol : Indian Unrest : p. 95.

*furthermost limits of Asia? India still had a soul to save."*⁴⁷

Ronaldshay writes that their effect was tremendous and that :

*"The nation felt a quickening in the beating of its heart, a stirring in its blood, the vibration of chords long silent in its race-consciousness."*⁴⁸

His younger brother, Barindra, assumed the role of a fiery prophet of militant nationalism. He demanded of India men, "hundreds of thousands of them who are ready to wipe out with their blood the stain of her age-long subjection".⁴⁹ He was the brain of the revolutionary movement in Bengal and he succeeded in enlisting bands of young men ready to lay down their lives for the freedom of their country. One of his colleagues, Hem Chandra, went to Paris to learn the art of preparing explosives from the Russian revolutionaries. The Anusilan Samiti, organised by prominent public workers like Babu Aswini Kumar Dutt, advocated the employment of force. The society had about 500 branches in the towns and villages of East Bengal and Dacca and Calcutta were its head-quarters. It trained young men in the revolutionary art and taught them that the armed subversion of British rule was the only path of Mukti—Salvation. The revolutionary activity began with the attempts to blow up the Lieut.-Governor's train in October 1907. On Dec. 6, the train in which he was travelling was actually derailed by a bomb near Midnapore. On 23 Dec. Mr. Allan, formerly the District Magistrate of Dacca, was shot in the back at a railway station in the district of Faridpur. On 30 April, 1908, an attempt was made on the life of Mr Kingsford, the Judge of Muzaffarpur, who was formerly the Chief Presidency Magistrate at Calcutta. The attempt resulted in the deaths of Mrs. and Miss Kennedy driving in a carriage. The Police discovered an ammunition factory in miniature in Maniktola in Calcutta and charged about thirty-four persons with conspiracy to wage war against the king. On 24 Jan. 1910, a Deputy Superintendent of Police was shot dead while leaving the High Court during the trial for this case—famous as the Alipore conspiracy case. The arrests made in this connection

47. Ronaldshay : The Heart of Aryavarta, pp. 89-90.

48. Ibid p. 91.

49. Ibid p. 92.

removed most of the ring-leaders of the movement. In the Howrah conspiracy case of 1910, the Police charged about fifty persons with similar intentions. The Dacca conspiracy case resulted in the rounding up of most of the revolutionary workers of East Bengal. The year 1911, however, still saw 18 bomb attempts by revolutionists and 16 of them occurred in East Bengal. The movement lingered on in the later period and throughout the World War I. According to the Indian Sedition Committee 1918, a singular feature of the movement in the later period was the increasing number of dacoities and isolated attempts at terrorism. The revolutionaries had their supply of arms and ammunition mostly from the French settlement of Chandranagore.⁵⁰

PUNJAB.

In the Punjab, which had been singularly quiet, there was discontent among the peasantry owing to the Colonisation Bill of the Government. It aimed at discouraging further fragmentation of land in the Chenab Colony by introducing the law of primogeniture. There was clamour against the measure as it interfered with the traditional rights relating to the division of property. In May 1907, the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai, the recognised leader of the Punjab, intensified the unrest. Sir Denzil Ibbetson, the Governor, unjustly charged Lalaji as a "revolutionary and a political enthusiast, who had been carried away by his theories into the most intense hatred of the British government."⁵¹ Lord Morley justified the policy of deportation on the ground that open trial and prosecution advertised sedition and made martyrs of political agitators.⁵² For sometime after the deportation of Lalaji, the Punjab was very much disturbed and uneasy. We are informed that :

*"The Europeans and Eurasians have been buying arms everywhere, and I hear the soldiers on the plains have been sleeping with their rifles in their beds, and the gunners with their gun-tracers by their sides."*⁵³

50. Report of Indian Sedition Committee pp. 22-50.

51. Morley : Speeches on Indian Affairs pp. 57-58.

52. Ibid p. 60.

53. Lord Minto to his wife dt. May 15, 1907—See Mary : India, Minto and Morley, p. 136.

The Viceroy, however, wisely refused to certify the Colonisation Bill and eased the situation.

MAHARASHTRA.

In Maharashtra the prosecution of Tilak exasperated the bold spirits of the Hindu population, particularly among the Chitapavan Brahmans. They derived their inspiration from Tilak's writings in the 'Kesari' whose circulation rose to about 20,000 copies a week by 1907. A favourite subject of discourse in its columns was "the alleged Russianisation of the administration, which must lead to Russian methods of agitation by the people."⁵⁴ Nasik was the head-quarters of the revolutionary society, the Abhinav Bharat, founded upon the model of the Russian organisations of Nihilists. It preached the campaign of political assassinations to terrorise the bureaucracy and bring about the collapse of administration. Ganesh Savarkar was the driving force of the organisation, and on 9th June 1909, he was sentenced to transportation for life. The District Magistrate of Nasik, Mr. Jackson, who had committed him for trial, was shot dead on 21st Dec. 1909 at a farewell party held in his honour. The Police got hold of most of the energetic members of the society, and about twenty-seven of them were sentenced to heavy and long punishments.⁵⁵ Three of them—Chitpavan Brahmans were executed. The members of the Society at Gwalior and Satara were likewise heavily sentenced for conspiracies connected with revolutionary activity. An attempt was, however, made on the lives of Lord and Lady Minto in Nov. 1909 when they were driving in a carriage at Ahmedabad.⁵⁵

THE MOVEMENT ABROAD :—

During this period revolutionary societies were at work ever outside India. It was Shyamaji Krishnavarma, a resident of Kathiawar, who conceived of the possibility of carrying on revolutionary activity abroad. He settled down at London shortly after the Rand murder in 1897. In Jan. 1905, he started the India Home Rule Society with himself as its President. He edited the Indian Sociologist, a monthly magazine of the Society. He also announced the award of six lectureships of Rs.1000 each to Indian scholars to enable them to visit the foreign countries and acquire

a knowledge of the freedom movements. S. R. Rana, a Guzerati pearl merchant, married to a French lady and settled at Paris also offered three travelling scholarships of Rs. 2000. In a short time the India Society became the nucleus of a revolutionary community. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, younger brother of Ganesh Savarkar, educated at the Fergusson College, Poona, and a young man of twenty-two joined it in 1906. He soon became the moving spirit of the movement, and his book "The Indian War of Independence—1857" won wide publicity. He supplied revolutionary literature to his Maratha comrades in India and arranged to send them arms and ammunition in a clandestine manner. One of the members of the Society, Madan Lal Dhingra assassinated Col. Sir William Curzon Wyllie, Political A. D. C. at the India Office at the Imperial Institute in London. This event occurred on 1st. July 1909 and was a bold reply to the indiscriminate hangings of Indian youths by the Government of India. Vinayak Savarkar was also tried and transported for life to the Andamans.⁵⁶ His escapades and adventures in the later period remain a thrilling feat of Indian patriotism.

With the organisation of the Ghadar party in California in 1911 by Har Dayal, the revolutionary movement received fresh strength. He started two periodicals, one in Gurumukhi and the other in Urdu, and advocated organised rebellion against the British Government. His doctrines appealed to the Indian community settled in Canada and the Americas. The Ghadar party swelled in strength with the addition of many revolutionary workers from India. In the first World War, he preached Indo-German collaboration against England. On 16th March 1914, he was put under arrest by the U. S. A. government, but during his release on bail he managed to abscond to Switzerland. During the War, the Ghadar party made many abortive attempts at inciting armed insurrections in India with foreign aid.

FAILURE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT :—

The revolutionary movement could not produce substantial results. There was no central organisation directing it on an all-India basis. Moreover it found favour with an insignificant

56. Ibid pp. 11-12 ; Chitrol : Indian Unrest. p. 60.

fraction of Indian humanity, the young element among the lower middle-class. The upper classes were horrified at the prospect of violence growing in public life and openly denounced the cult of the bomb. As early as March 1907, we find Surendranath Banerjea, 'the King of Bengal', conferring with Lord Minto and asking for his assistance "to moderate the evil passions of the Bengali, and inveighing against the extravagances of Bepin Chandra Pal",⁵⁷ Sir Ashutosh, Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, advised the Viceroy "that the national schools and private colleges are hot-beds of sedition, and until we deal with them we can have no permanent peace".⁵⁸ Emboldened by the support of the upper classes, the British Government dealt heavily with the revolutionary activity. In his letter of May 28, 1908 to Lord Morley, the Viceroy firmly pointed out :

"The Raj will not disappear in India as long as the British race remains what it is, because we shall fight for the Raj as hard as we have ever fought, if it comes to fighting and we shall win as we have always won."

The British government successfully fortified its position against the extremists and terrorists by isolating them and persecuting them. While Lord Morley was enunciating high-sounding principles of democratic philosophy at the India Office, Minto's Government was making additions of new penal and repressive laws to the Statute Book. The Criminal Law Amendment Act passed in Dec 1908 authorised the government to declare some associations as unlawful. By the Newspapers Act of 1908 and the Press Act of 1910, most of the extremist papers were closed down and printing and publication rigorously controlled. The Seditious Meetings Act of 1911 gave the executive considerable power to control public meetings. A special Crimes Act was passed for the summary trial of political prisoners. The old Bengal Regulations of 1813 relating to deportation were freely applied to restore criminal traffic between India and the Andamans. Lord Morley confessed that the Indian Government was following the "Russian argument" of "packing off train-loads of suspects to Siberia" to "terrify the anarchists out of their wits".⁶⁰

57. Mary : India, Minto and Morley p. 109.

58. Ibid p. 254.

59. Ibid p. 236.

60. Cited in P. C. Ray's : Life and Times of C. R. Das pp. 70-71.

CHAPTER VI

TRIUMPH OF REACTION AND MUSLIM POLITICS.

Influence of Extremism on the Congress Movement—The Surat split of 1907—Influence of Extremism on the British policies—The policy of conciliation and repression—The policy of counterpoise of the Native against Native—Encouragement to Muslim Communalism—The Muslim League—The significance of the Viceroyalty of Lord Hardinge.

THE CONGRESS MOVEMENT: THE RISE OF THE EXTREMIST PARTY:—

With the growth of political consciousness among the lower middle class and its infiltration in the Congress, the Congress movement was bound to be influenced by the extremist psychology. This new element was dissatisfied with the old leadership and its compromising attitude. The elders of the Congress counselled patience believing that cooperation with the British government was possible. But the repressive measures of the authorities produced distrust of constitutional agitation. Mr. Gokhale explained to Mr. Nevinson that during the last three years of Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty people were "in a state of perpetual irritation". The success of the Liberal Party at the elections raised their hopes high but they were disappointed and began to lose faith in English integrity and sense of justice. Young men questioned the utility of constitutional agitation which only resulted in the Partition of Bengal. "That's how Extremists are created", he said.¹ Annie Besant holds similar opinion, that coercion did its "deadly work", and that "The seeds sown by Lord Curzon were to ripen into their harvest of dragon-teeth".² In the Congress, we observe, the formation of a Leftist wing quite radical in its political outlook. It was insignificant in numerical strength but it enjoyed the support and sympathy of the industrial class. After 1894, when the duty on cotton imports was

1. Nevinson : The New Spirit in India p. 226

2. How India Wrought for Freedom : p. 458.

lowered to 3½%, the mill-owning class interested itself actively in politics and was not happy at the lily-livered agitation of the liberal politicians. The Congress fell under the influence of this class more and more in the later period and received full moral and financial support from it. It had no liking for revolutionary politics but it favoured effective political agitation to impose pressure on the government. It worked behind the scenes and was now, curiously enough, in league with the radical lower middle-class elements against the upper middle-class. The agitation against partition cemented the alignment between the two classes and sharpened the struggle between the Right and Left wings of the Congress. In this context, we have the following observation of Mr. Garraat :

"The interest of the educated classes in nationalism has always been partly economic and partly religious. Unemployment is a canker which has eaten into Indian social life for generations, and has brought about an alliance between the classes, which would usually do clerical work, and the small but influential group of manufacturers who are interested in India's industrial development. The less extreme sections of the movement (not the revolutionaries) have, from the first received financial and moral support from the mill-owners, who are keen protectionists, and India's fiscal independence has always figured amongst the Congress demands".³

In the Congress, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, and Lajpat Rai became popular as the leaders of the radical wing. During the Swadeshi movement, Arabindo Ghosh, a magnetic personality, joined their ranks. They tried to influence the course of the Congress movement and bring it on the road of effective political agitation. At the 21st Congress Session of Banaras held from 27th to 30th Dec. 1905, disagreements between the extremists and the moderates were apparent. Here the Congress had the occasion to hear the delegates who had been sent to England to press the claims of India on the British public prior to the general elections due after 1905. Lajpat Rai was one of them and he "struck an unmistakable note of despondency". In his opinion,

3 Garraat, G. T : An Indian Commentary p. 119.

*"the British democracy was too busy with their own affairs to do any thing for them, that the British press was not willing to champion Indian aspirations, that it was hard to get a hearing in England, and that the influence and the credit of the Anglo-Indians was too strong to be met successfully by the necessarily inadequate agitation which the Congress could set up in England. On his return to India the message which he brought to his people was, that if they really cared for their country, they would have to strike the blow for freedom themselves, and that they would have to furnish unmistakable proofs of their earnestness."*⁴

Gokhale was another delegate and he was chosen to preside over the session. His influence was great over both the sections and he was still hopeful of getting some justice from the Liberal Party likely to come out successful. At this session, the Congress had to tackle a difficult question in regard to the proposed visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales in Jan., 1906. Lord Minto was very uneasy at the threats of their boycott of the visit in the Extremist circles. He had met Gokhale and taken an assurance from him that every care would be taken to make the royal visit a success. The moderates now wanted to bring a resolution in the open session welcoming the Royal party. The Bengali contingent of extremists was loud in its denunciation of the move. The matter could be settled peacefully only when Gokhale appealed to the Maharashtra and the Punjab leaders to use their influence with the Bengali delegates. They agreed to let the resolution be passed in their absence. The partition of Bengal had, however, made it difficult for the moderates to tread smoothly on the beaten track. They had to make a show of compromise with the extremists. In his Presidential address, Gokhale remarked that he was taking charge of the vessel of the Congress with rocks ahead and angry waves beating around. He condemned the Partition and said :

"The tremendous upheaval of popular feeling which has taken place in Bengal in consequence of the Partition, will constitute a landmark in the history of our National

*progress.....Bengal's heroic stand against the oppression of a harsh and uncontrolled bureaucracy has astonished and gratified all India....."*⁵

About the Swadeshi, he spoke with enthusiasm :

*"The devotion to Motherland, which is enshrined in the highest Swadeshi, is an influence so profound and so passionate that its very thought thrills and its actual touch lifts one out of oneself. India needs to-day above everything else that the gospel of this devotion should be preached to high and low, to Prince and to peasant, in town and in hamlet, till the Service of Motherland becomes with us as overmastering a passion as it is in Japan."*⁶

The Congress complimented Bengal for the new route of political progress it was showing to India. It again deputed Gokhale to proceed to England and urge on the British authorities an enlightened policy towards India. It, however, did not pass any resolution extending its support to the passive resistance movement advocated by Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

THE CALCUTTA CONGRESS 1906 :—

In the year 1906, the boycott agitation was in full swing and trouble was anticipated at the annual session of the Congress towards the close of the year. The mission of Gokhale to England also bore no fruit and Lord Morley, the new Secretary of State, declared the Partition as a settled fact. The extremist party of the Congress was now more popular and in Bengal both the moderates and the extremists worked together for the annulment of the partition. The Presidentship of the Congress for the session of 1906 became a bone of contention between the two wings of the Congress. Bepin Chandra Pal, the leader of the Bengali extremists put forward the candidature of Tilak, which was too much for the moderates. Sir Pherozeshah Mehta solved the tangle by securing the approval of Dadabhai Naoroji, a man universally loved and respected, for the Presidentship. But the Congress of 1906 which met at Calcutta under the thunders of boycott and swadeshi streaming across the skies was not a

5. Annie Besant pp. 418-419.

6. Ibid p. 419.

smooth sailing. It saw the largest gathering of its history so far and 16000 persons crammed its pandal when it met on 26th Dec. Bengal was writhing in anguish all the more because the year had robbed her of two of her beloved sons, W. C. Bonnerjee and Anand Mohan Bose. The Chairman of the Reception Committee, Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh, welcomed the President-elect and recounted the tragic tale of Bengal's sufferings. He spoke warmly of Swadeshism, in which one saw "the cradle of a New India."⁷ The President also condemned the barbarous system of despotism under which India groaned and quoted Gladstone that :

"Freedom is the breath of our life...we stand for liberty, our policy is the policy of freedom".⁸

At this Congress the Extremists gained all their points although with difficulty. They could compel the Moderats to pass the four famous resolutions on Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education. In this sense the Congress advanced a few steps further from the position it occupied at Banaras. It approved of the Boycott Movement inaugurated in Bengal by way of protest against the partition as legitimate. It accorded its most cordial support to the Swadeshi Movement and called upon people to make earnest and sustained efforts for its success. It was of opinion that time had arrived when the people were to take up the question of national education earnestly. Above all, it declared Dominion Status as its goal and pressed the government to make an effective beginning in that direction.

SURAT CONGRESS 1907 :—

The liberal leaders of the Congress were, however, not prepared to lead any active agitation for Swaraj, dear to the Extremists. The left wing demanded from it a sanction not only for the boycott of goods but also for the boycott of offices and government associations. It was with difficulty that the Grand Old Man of India could manage the Congress of 1906 and it was plain that an open tussle between the two wings was inevitable. There was sharp difference of opinion between the two atleast on the methods to be adopted to realise the common ends. In March 1907, Lord Minto widened the gulf separating

7. Ibid p. 443

8. Ibid pp. 444-446

them and precipitated the Surat crisis. He made the first public announcement regarding his despatch to the Home Government on administrative reforms. The frequent parleys which the moderate leaders held with the Viceroy made the Extremists extremely suspicious about them. The only course left open to them was to make a bold bid for the leadership of the Congress. The Surat Session of 1907 consequently was a clear tug-of-war between the two wings of the Congress on the election for Presidentship. According to the convention the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the previous session was usually voted to the Chair. But the Leftists resented the nomination of Dr. Rash Behari owing to his moderate sympathies. There was also a wild rumour that the four militant resolutions of the Calcutta Congress were not to be taken up for consideration. The extremists, therefore, demanded an open election and on the first day of the session proposed the name of Lajpat Rai. He had just been released after his deportation and they wanted to elect him as a protest against the unfair treatment meted out to him by the government. He, however, refused "to be made into a battle-flag, and absolutely declined to be elected President in so irregular a fashion."⁹ Dr. Rash Behari then took his seat duly proposed and seconded amidst cries of 'No', 'No' from the Leftist benches. The scene was uproarious and the Chairman had to adjourn the meeting. On the next day, 27th December, the Congress meeting again ended in disorder and the Police had to clear the hall. We have the following account of it by Annie Besant :

"The Congress met again on the 27th Dec. and the warm greeting of a huge majority showed the feeling of the delegates. Mr. Surendranath Banerjee finished his speech, Pandit Moti Lal Nehru supported his proposal, and Dr. Rash Behari Gosh was elected, and took the chair amid vociferous applause. Mr. B. G. Tilak then came to the platform and said he wished to move an amendment, either about the adjournment, or to the Presidential Election. An argument ensued. Mr. Tilak attempted to address the delegates, who refused to listen to him, upholding the authority of the President, who had

ruled him out of order. The platform was charged by men armed with sticks, a heavy shoe (it was Maratha shoe) was flung at and struck Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Mr. Surendranath Banerjee, the President declared the meeting adjourned, and the police cleared the Hall—a sad page in the glorious history of the Congress".¹⁰

The moderates, who were in a majority without doubt, showed a lamentable lack of foresight in opposing open election for Presidentship. They must be aware of the high feelings in the extremist ranks, and in disallowing Tilak from exercising his right of speech as a member of the Congress, they were also guilty of an act of discourtesy. It is, however, certain that the extremists had already decided on a course of action which involved the exercise of force to cow the moderates into submission. But the battle for swaraj was to be won outside, and won against the government which had a tremendous superiority in brute force. By using the physical force argument, they made themselves ridiculous and played into the hands of the moderates and the bureaucracy. We are informed that Mr. Tilak was in full sympathy with such a line of action. A Bengali Extremist of the period, who later came to be known as a revolutionary, writes :

"On reaching Surat possibly one day earlier, I purchased all the bamboo sticks about 150 in number available in local shops. I reported this to Arabindo Ghose and told him that force was the only practical means to capture the Congress pandal and to scare away the moderates who would not dare to face troubles. He asked me to refer it to the Marahatta leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Kharparde of Amarawati approved of the idea and I distributed the sticks amongst the younger sections of the Maratha delegates and Punjab led by Sardar Ajit Singh."¹¹

It is possible that the trouble at Surat might have been averted, had the Congress possessed a written constitution. Sober extremist elements like Lajpat Rai regretted it and cast in their lot with

10. Ibid pp. 467-468.

11. Dr. Chakrabarty, C : New India p. 5.

the moderates. They met in a separate convention, drafted the Congress constitution and closed the door of the Congress to all those who did not believe in constitutional methods of agitation. The British Government conciliated them by its mild dose of 1909 Reforms and helped them to retain their power and prestige.

The Surat episode, says Annie Besant, was "the saddest episode in the story of the Congress," as it caused a split in the nationalist party.¹² The overwhelming influence of the moderates and Minto's policy of conciliation foiled the attempts of the extremists in working out a revolution inside the Congress. Till the first World War, they remained almost in a wilderness.

THE BRITISH POLICY OF CONCILIATION AND REPRESSION : —

Lord Curzon's policies of distrust had produced unrest and both Minto and Morley were convinced of the need of a policy of conciliation. None of them was, however, keen on radical reforms. In his letter of June 6, 1905, Lord Morley clearly wrote to Minto that he was not in favour of summoning an "Indian Duma" and was not prepared to effect "a grand revolution." He completely repudiated all possibility of adapting "English political institutions to the nations who inhabit India." He, however, recognised the new spirit agitating India and advocated a policy of slow reforms. The government in the old spirit, he said, was not possible and he refused "to walk blind-folded in the ways of autocracy." He wrote :

*"You cannot go on governing in the same spirit ; you have got to deal with the Congress party and Congress principles whatever you may think of them."*¹³

The British government knew that the policy of ruthless repression did not work out in the Tsarist Russia and could not save the lives of the Trepoffs. Moreover, people soon get used to it and cease to fear it. For cutting the "malignant growth" of revolutionary crime, to use the expression of Montagu, the Under-Secretary of State, the British government decided on a policy of "blended repression and concession".¹⁴ From his Office at the White Hall, Morley constantly preached the wisdom of counter-acting Congress ideas by "another programme." Ideas can only

12. How India Wrought for Freedom p. 465.

13. Mary : India, Minto and Morley p. 30.

14. Montagu, E. S. : On Indian Affairs p. 276.

he combated by ideas, he wrote to the Viceroy.¹⁵ Lord Minto was also impressed that beneath a seemingly calm surface there existed a mass of smothered political discontent, and that a mild instalment of reforms was necessary to conciliate the upper classes. Consequently the Reforms of 1909, truly states Dr. Zacharias, were held out to India 'as an olive branch'.¹⁶ They did not concede an iota of responsibility to the Indian hands and merely enlarged the existing Legislative Councils to provide for a majority of the non-official elements in the provinces. The reformed Councils were no better than dignified debating clubs and Lord Morley clearly said in his speech in the House of Lords on Dec. 17, 1908:

*"If it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or indirectly to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I for one, would have nothing at all to do with it."*¹⁷

Their main feature was the admission of Indians to the Executive Councils of the Viceroy and of the Governors of Madras and Bombay. In 1908, the Congress hailed them as a fairly liberal measure of constitutional reforms, as giving the people "a substantial share in the management of their affairs."¹⁸ It had, however, soon to revise its opinion and pronounce them as a dismal failure. The reforms had one beneficial result from the British point of view. They conciliated the liberal politicians and created a rift in the solidarity of Indian nationalism. The extremists were isolated and dealt with by an iron rod.

THE POLICY OF COUNTER-POISE OF NATIVE AGAINST NATIVE :—

The Reforms also entrenched Muslim Communalism in the field against Indian nationalism, which was identified with Hindu extremism. They introduced anti-democratic communal representation and separate electorate. It is interesting to study how the policy of 'counterpoise of native against native' underlying them was planned and executed during this period.

It was Lord Curzon who first thought of a Council of Princes as a device against the Congress,¹⁹ but he could not work out his

15 Mary India, Minto and Morley p 99

16 Zacharias, H C E. *Renascent India*, p. 155

17 Ibid footnote p 158

18 Annie Besant p. 485

19, Mary India, Minto and Morley p 100

policy. Lord Minto hit on the same idea and wrote to Lord Morley :

*"I have been thinking a good deal lately of a possible counterpoise to Congress aims. I think we may find a solution in the Council of Princes, or in an elaboration of that idea; a Privy Council not only of Native Rulers, but of a few other big men to meet say once a year for a week or a fortnight at Delhi for instance".*²⁰

Fearing the ascendancy of disloyal elements in the Congress, the Viceroy even corresponded with the Ruling Chiefs "with a view to mutual cooperation against a common danger." Their replies were sympathetic and they recommended strong action against the Indian Press for its nationalist propaganda.²¹ The idea of a Council of Princes, however, did not appeal to Morley as promising. What he feared was that :

*"Be sure that before long the Mohammedans will throw in their lot with the Congressmen against you and so on and so forth."*²²

The loyalty of the Princely order was unquestionable and it was certainly more expedient to secure the attachment of the Muslim community. The spread of Western education among the Muslims was infecting their younger generations with nationalism and both the loyalist leaders of the community and the government were seriously perturbed. Lord Minto was in agreement with the Secretary of State and wrote :

*"The younger generation (Muslims) were wavering, inclined to throw in their lot with the advanced agitators of the Congress, and a howl went up that the loyal Mohammedans were not to be supported, and that the agitators were to obtain their demands through agitation."*²³

The British bureaucracy had certainly substantial reasons to patronise Muslim communalism. As a great community it could be used as a solid mass against Indian nationalism which was largely Hindu enlightenment and patriotism. It was also easy to rescue the Muslims from the nationalist propaganda by

20. Letter to Morley, May 28, 1906, Ibid pp. 28-29

21. Lovett, V : A History of the Indian National Movement. p 84.

22. Mary : p. 30.

23. Ibid p. 45.

promising them more crumbs of office and representation. In relation to the Hindus the Muslims were comparatively backward and could not compete with them on a basis of parity. They could be relied upon to play to the tune of the masters in an inspired manner. It is also not far from truth that the Muslim is more militant and spirited than the Hindu. The cramping influences of caste and orthodoxy do not permit the Hindu to act with vigour on the stage of life. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was not far wrong in telling his masters that agitation was not to be allowed to spread to the warlike Muslims and that "a Mohammedan agitation was not the same as a Bengali agitation."²⁴

THE MUSLIM DEPUTATION :—

It was not difficult for the bureaucracy to manage a Muslim deputation to the government pressing the extra claims of the community. It was Colonel Dunlop Smith, Private Secretary to the Viceroy, who set the ball rolling. He wrote to Principal Archbold of the Aligarh College that the Viceroy would be happy to receive some Muslim deputation. The Principal pressed Nawab Moshin-ul-Mulk, the Secretary of the College, to "expedite matters" in organising "a powerful movement in the short time at our disposal". A deputation of about 35 Muslims representing different provinces was soon ready to meet the Viceroy.²⁵ It was led by H. H. the Aga Khan, whom the Viceroy described as "the spiritual head of the Khoja Muslim Community—claims descent from Ali and is their ruler by divine right, but without a territory."²⁶ The deputation met the Viceroy on Oct. 1, 1906 and made a strong claim for communal representation, if the principle of election was accepted in the forthcoming reforms. Lord Minto expressed entire agreement with the deputation and promised that in any system of representation "whether it affects a Municipality or a District Board or a Legislative Council, in which it is proposed to introduce or increase an electoral organisation, the Muslim Community should be represented as a community." He sympathised with the extra claims of the community on state patronage and said :

24. Cited in Dr. Krishna, K. B. The Problems of Minorities p. 1

25. Mehta and Patwardhan The Communal Triangle in pp. 62-63,

26. Mary p. 45.

*"You justly claim that your position should be estimated not only on your numerical strength, but in respect to the political importance of your community and the service it has rendered to the Empire"*²⁷

The members of the deputation were entertained at a tea-party in the garden of the Viceregal Lodge at Simla. The entire bureaucracy was jubilant and the Viceroy wrote about the day—Oct. 1, 1906 :

*"This has been a very eventful day : as some one said to me, "an epoch in Indian history".*²⁸

The official who sent the following message to the Viceroy spoke the plain truth :

*"I must send Your Excellency a line to say that a very, very big thing has happened to-day. A work of statesmanship that will affect India and Indian history for many a long year. It is nothing less than the pulling back of sixty-two millions of people from joining the ranks of the seditious opposition."*²⁹

The Secretary of State was also very happy and wrote to the Viceroy :

*"All that you tell me of your Mohammedans is full of interest, and I only regret that I could not have moved about unseen at your garden party."*³⁰

THE MUSLIM LEAGUE :—

The Muslim deputation, to use the words of Muhammad Ali was a "command performance". Its leaders were "inspired by certain Anglo-Indian officials, and these officials have pulled wires at Simla and in London and of malice afore thought sowed discord between the Hindu and Mohammedan communities by showing the Muslims special favours."³¹ Nawab Salimullah Khan of Dacca, to whom Lord Curzon's government had advanced a loan of £ 1,00,000 at a low rate of interest, encouraged by the success of the deputation founded the All India Muslim

27. Ibid. pp. 46-47.

28. Ibid. p. 45.

29. Ibid, pp. 47-48.

30. Ibid p. 48.

31, Mehta and Patwardhan p. 66,

League on 30th Dec. 1906. The aims and objects of the League were as follows :

- (1) To promote among Indian Muslims feelings of loyalty towards the British government.
- (2) To protect the political and other rights of Indian Muslims and to place their needs and aspirations before the government in temperate language.
- (3) Without prejudice to the objects mentioned above, to promote friendly feelings between Muslims and other communities.

At its 1908 Session at Amritsar, under the Presidentship of Sir Syed Ali Imam, the League demanded the extension of communal representation, the appointment of a Muslim and Hindu to the Privy Council, and larger share in the services. The same resolutions were repeated at the 1909 Session.

The Minto-Morley Reforms mark a decisive stage in the development of British policy of using Indians against Indians. They enunciated a mischievous doctrine of minority representation by accepting religion as the basis of determining a political minority. They strengthened the forces of communalism and created complications in the struggle towards *Swraj*. At its Lahore session of 1909, the Congress expressed dissatisfaction with the Indian Councils Act, 1909, at the excessive representation given to the Muslims, and the "unjust, invidious, and humiliating distinctions made between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects...in the matter of the electorates, the franchise, and the qualifications of the candidates". Surendranath pointed out that the bureaucracy had "its revenge upon us for the part we have played in these concessions".³² At the 1910 Congress Session at Allahabad, Sir William Wedderburn said that separate electorates were not desirable. He pointed out that in the U.P. where only one-seventh of the population professed the Muslim faith, and where there were no separate electorates, the common electorate returned a very large number of Muslim members.³³ But the mischief was done and the Congress, too, accepted it in its later agreements with the Muslims.

32. Annie Besant p. 495

33. Ibid p. 510. He was referring to the elections to the District Boards and Municipalities.

THE VICEROYALTY OF LORD HARDINGE :—

The extremist agitation from 1905 onwards had infused new life into the Congress and had brought the lower middle-class and to some extent the masses in the field of political agitation. But after the Surat split the Congress passed completely under the influence of the moderates, who were eminent educationists, lawyers, doctors living in a "world cut off from the masses and even the lower middle-class."³⁴ They rallied to the Minto-Morley scheme. The extremists were outside the Congress and were without effective leadership. Tilak was deported to Mandalay for six years and other leaders of extremism were likewise persecuted. In the years following the assumption of Viceroyalty by Lord Hardinge towards the close of 1910, political life grew rather dull. Lord Hardinge had received his training at the Foreign office and had a keen understanding of international affairs. He wanted to conciliate further the nationalist elements before Great Britain was involved in a war which was fast approaching. For the first time, he received the Congress deputation, in the words of Sir William Wedderburn, "in friendly personal recognition."³⁵ In the year 1911, it was decided that the new King George V should visit India and hold a Durbar. At the Durbar the King Emperor announced from his lips the rendition of the Partition. It conciliated Bengal which had experienced the ordeal by fire. The Congress welcomed the King "not only as our king and Emperor, but as our deliverer." It paid a hearty tribute to Lord Hardinge, "that statesman, lonely and serene.....who saw the wrong and did the right."³⁶ In the year 1912, a Royal Commission was also appointed to report on the conditions of the the Public Services and investigate the possibilities of larger employment of Indians in higher services. It had a salutary effect in humouring even the radical elements of the educated middle-class.

The years 1910-1918 covering the Viceroyalty of Lord Hardinge and the first World War also witnessed a marked change in the Muslim political consciousness. During this

34. Nehru, J : Autobiography p. 29.

35. Annie Besant : p. 512

36. Ibid p. 529. The other important points in the king's declaration were transfer of capital from Calcutta to Delhi and separation of Bihar from Bengal.

period, the reactionary crew of the League went into the background and leaders with nationalist views controlled its politics. Change in the official attitude towards the Congress and foreign influences were responsible for this development. The pro-Congress sympathies of Hardinge cooled the fervour of the Muslim communalists who now drifted towards the Congress. The international situation also disillusioned the Muslims and hit hard their loyalist convictions. The Balkan countries of the Ottoman Empire were fighting for their deliverance and were helped by Russia, which was in alliance with England. The Sultan of Turkey, the Caliph of Islam was thus arrayed against Russia and England. During the first Balkan War (1912-13), the Muslims sent a medical mission to Turkey under Dr. Ansari, and they were annoyed at the Anglo-Russian entente aimed against Germany and the Caliph of Islam. In the War which broke out in 1914, Turkey, as an ally of Germany, fought the British and orthodox Muslims visualised England as an enemy of Islam. To them, even India was not a Dar-ul-Islam, the land of the faithful as it was under the British infidels. Inside the League, there was the rise of the radical party under the leadership of Maulana Muhammad Ali and this party advocated compromise with the Congress. Through his English paper, the 'Comrade' founded in Calcutta in 1910, and the 'Hamdard', the Urdu paper, he lifted the Muslim mind to the plane of nationalism. He carried on propaganda against narrow communalism and loyalism influencing the League Councils. The predominance of his group led the League to declare Self-Government under the Crown as its creed at the Lucknow Session of 1913. The voice of nationalists like Dr. Ansari, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, the editor of the 'Al-Hilal', and Hakim Ajmal Khan at the Session of 1914, made the League come to closer understanding with the Congress. The war further awakened the Muslims and most of their religious-minded leaders began to dream of an independent Republic of India. Some of them even worked in collaboration with Hindu revolutionaries for the armed overthrow of British rule. The nationalism of the Muslim mind, however, wilted away when the Sultan, the Caliph, was set aside by young Turkey rising under Kamal Pasha.

The Viceroyalty of Lord Hardinge, therefore, saw the

Hindus and Muslims, the Congress and the League moving towards a common platform. Sir William Wedderburn, a devoted worker of the Congress after his retirement from the Civil Service, made earnest efforts in that direction. The Anglo-Indian press was alarmed at his attempts to unite Hindus and Muslims, and one of the papers remarked :

*"Why do these men want to unite the two communities, if it is not to unite them against the Government."*³⁷

The Congress also espoused the cause of the decrepit Turkish Empire to exploit the extra-territorial loyalties of the Muslim intelligentsia. At its 1913 Session, it expressed its grief over "the subversion of the Ottoman power in Europe and the strangling of Persia."³⁸ It welcomed the adoption of the ideal of self-government of India by Muslim League. It hoped that in future the two organisations could have harmonious cooperation and joint concerted action for common political ends. Mr. Bhupendra-nath Basu emphasised the importance of a united ideal, for India was not the India of the Hindu or the Muslim but the India in which all had a share. "If there have been misunderstandings in the past, let us forget them", said he and that if they could unite :

*"The India of the future will be a stronger, nobler, greater, higher, aye, and a brighter India than was realized by Ashoka in the plenitude of his power, a better India than was revealed to Akbar in the wildest of his visions."*³⁹

There is no doubt that during the Viceroyalty of Lord Minto the policies of conciliation and counterpoise triumphed over the force of nationalism. The period of Lord Hardinge prepared the ground for Indo-British collaboration during the war. The Congress assumed the political leadership of the nation and the nationalist agitation remained a safe constitutional affair. England owe to Lord Hardinge what it owe only to her great Empire-builders. He charmed India and managed it well in the early years of the war when it appeared that England was almost going down to the bottom of the seas.

37. Annie Besant, p. 531.

38. Ibid p. 554.

39. Ibid pp. 555-56.

CHAPTER VII

THE EXTREMIST AND REVOLUTIONARY SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT—EMINENT PERSONALITIES

Religion and Extremism—Revolt against Liberalism—Political Technique.
The Revolutionary Schools, Terrorists, Revolutionaries—Bal Gangadhar Tilak—
Lajpat Rai—Har Dayal—Arabindo Ghosh—Bepin Chandra Pal

THE EXTREMIST SCHOOLS :—

The extremism of the early twentieth century was inspired by religious revivalism. Patriotism was not merely a political loyalty to the country or vindication of the rights of nationality, but a religious conception, a sacred duty for which no sacrifice was beneath the dignity of man. We have, consequently, in our political life a curious blending of religion with politics and communalism with patriotism. In Bengal, along with the development of religious nationalism during the Partition days and later, we also mark the beginnings of Hindu-Muslim tension, at some places, in quite aggravated form.

RELIGION AND EXTREMISM :—

The nationalists like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bepin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, Arabindo Ghosh leading the extremist wing in the Congress, as opposed to the liberal democrats, were influenced by Hindu revivalism of the period. They were ~~versed~~ versed in ancient learning and thought and some of them were also deeply religious men. They were dominated by love of their country and love of things, Indian. They had strong dislike of foreign rule and foreign things, English education, English thought and English ways of living. It would not be incorrect to state that their nationalism had taken large draught from the fountain of Hindu religion. Through his paper, the 'Kesari', Tilak attacked not only the British but also Islam and Christianity and expounded the doctrines of the Vedas and the Bhagavat. In the Bombay Presidency, he inaugurated annual processions

in honour of the elephant-headed god of Wisdom, Ganpati and Shivaji, the Maratha hero. The public festivals at the anniversary of the birth and coronation of Shivaji were held regularly at Poona after 1895.¹ He exhorted his followers to emulate the example of Shivaji, and to defend the interests of Hindu religion, of which Ganpati was the protector. He passed as a 'Jehovah' of popular deliverance and in the opinion of Macnicol, he was "Lokmanya, that is demagogue, the voice of popular passion, crude, violent, dangerous."² Tilak was certainly a direct contrast of Gokhale, who was never a popular hero of Maharashtra. Gokhale always insisted on the need of carrying the Muslims with them in their national movement and its demand for freedom. He was incapable of playing upon popular imagination by depicting the horrors of contamination with other faiths.

In its religious outlook, the Bengali Extremist School was more emotional and aggressive. Bepin Chandra Pal, the leader of the Bengali extremists was himself a rationalist and free-thinker and soon after finishing his education had embraced the Brahma-Samaj. But he preached the gospel of religious nationalism to awaken the patriotic spirit of the Bengali race. In 1901, he launched the "New India" and through its columns he carried on vigorous propaganda against the outlook and methods of the moderates. After the partition of Bengal, Arabindo Ghosh, an eminent intellectual and Vedantist, joined him and edited the "Bande-Matram". Their writings revived the ancient idealism of the Sakti cult and all the great forms and symbols of Hindu worship were given a new political meaning. The goddesses, Kali and Durga, wrote B. C. Pal, had no message to the weakling. Durga Puja, he said, was originally a ceremony associated with war and that the animal sacrifices were intended to quicken the martial spirit of the Indian race. He wrote :

1. The authors of the Indian Sedition Committee Report of 1918 are of opinion that "Public Ganpati festivals appear to have arisen out of an anti-Mohammedan movement started after riots which broke out in the city of Bombay in 1893 between Hindus and Mohammedans." From 1894 onwards, they were conducted on a larger scale and Hindu agitators incited the people both against the British and the Muslim. They asked them to free their calves and kine from their troubles. See p. 10,
2. The Making of Modern India p. 12 and p. 19.

*"Durga stands to-day to immense number of the Bengali people, not merely as a Pauranic deity or as a mythological figure, but as the visible representation of the enter-nal spirit of their race."*³

Kali was the mother, 'India', covered with the blackest gloom, despoiled of all wealth, and without a cloak to wear, but "the grim goddess, dark and naked, bearing a garland of human heads around her neck,—heads from which blood is dripping.....the heads with dripping blood are those of her own children, destroyed by famine and pestilence."⁴ The old gods and goddesses who had lost their hold on the popular mind were reconstituted with a new nationalist interpretation in the mind and soul of Bengal. B. C. Pal remarks :

*"This wonderful transfiguration of the old gods and goddesses is carrying the message of new nationalism to the women and masses of the country."*⁵

The writings of Arabindo were still more vehement and inspiring, and Valentine Chirol calls him "one of the most remarkable figures that Indian unrest has produced", "the high-priest of a religious revival which has taken a profound hold on the imagination of the emotional youth of Bengal."⁶ "Independence in all our movements is the goal of life," said Arabindo, "and Hinduism will alone fulfil this aspiration of ours." According to him, "Nationalism is a religion that comes from God." It could not die "because it is God who is working in Bengal."⁷

REVOLT AGAINST LIBERALISM:—

The extremist or the nationalist school as it is generally spoken of was a revolt against liberalism which was guiding the Congress movement. The liberals saw the issues of national emancipation in terms of right and wrong. But the extremists believed that the British Imperialists would not sacrifice their dominion for abstract principles of right and justice. A fundamental article of the liberal creed was insistence on the necessity of maintaining connection with England. India independent of

3. Pal, B. C : The New Spirit. p. 85.

4. B. C. Pal cited in Lajpat Rai : Young India ppi 190-191.

5. Ibid.

6. Indian Unrest p. 89.

7. Cited in Zacharias, H.C.E. : Renascent India p. 149.

the Empire was out of question. Dominion Status was to be attained gradually by constitutional methods, by proving to the British nation that Indians were capable of responsible government. According to the extremists, cooperation with the British Government was not possible and fruitful as it was ruinous to the country materially and morally. Petitions and prayers to the White-hall and the British nation too served no purpose. Foreign rule was an evil, said Tilak, the leader of the Poona school of Extremism, and self-reliant, independent action was necessary for pressure on the bureaucracy. In his speeches before 1907, he emphasised that days of prayers and protests had passed, and it was no use educating the British public—you will not be able to convince them by mere words." He did not believe that there can be any benevolence in politics, and said,

*"Prepare your forces, organise your power, and then go to work so that they can not refuse you what you demand."*⁸

The goal of the Poona extremists did not materially differ from those of the conservatives and moderates. Tilak had no doubts that the ideal of colonial Self-Govt. too, was perhaps generations ahead." His immediate object was to put pressure on the bureaucracy which was "despotic, alien, and absentee." He explained to Nevinson, the correspondent of the 'Manchester Guardian' :

*"It is not by our purpose, but by our methods only that our party has earned the name of Extremist. Certainly, there is a very small party which talks about abolishing the British rule at once and completely. That does not concern us ; it is much too far in the future."*⁹

The Bengali school was, however, more radical. Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal, the leader of this school, did not at this period believe in self-government of the colonial pattern. His ideal was Swaraj and he considered it incompatible with the maintenance of British connection. He believed in a free independent India, not within the Empire, but possibly an ally of Britain. He considered the ideal of Dominion Status as unpracticable. According to him, the commercial and industrial interests of England would not allow her to grant India Dominion Status.

8. Tilak, B.G. : Speeches and Writings, pp. 24-25, 39, 48.

9. Nevinson : The New Spirit in India p. 226.

He was of opinion that a small country like England with a handful of population could not compete with a mighty sub-continent like India with vast resources on a fair and equitable basis. India was bound to be the predominant partner in the Imperial firm and England could never contemplate a self-governing India forming a vital and organic part of the Empire. According to him, Dominion Status was a far more impracticable thing to attain "than even our ideal Swaraj." This Swaraj was, however, not to be accepted as a gift from the British Government. It was to be won. "If the Government were to come and tell me today take Swaraj," said he, "I would say, thank you for the gift, but I will not have that which I cannot acquire by my own hands."¹⁰ Valentine Chirol writes that Englishmen "will be grateful to him," for having developed his ideas on Swaraj with "merciless logic."¹¹ It would be appropriate to speak of the extremist nationalist school as the school of self-reliance in Indian politics.

POLITICAL TECHNIQUE:—

Effective agitation and constructive work were the means through which the extremists sought to achieve their political aims. They did not believe in the cult of the bomb or the revolver and thought in terms of effective political agitation to put effective pressure on the authorities. B. C. Pal pointed out that :

*"Our programme is that we shall so work in the country, so combine the resources of the people, so organise the forces of the nation, so develop instincts of freedom in the community, that by this means we shall, shall in the imperative, compel the submission to our will of any power that may set itself against us."*¹²

They believed in preparing the nation for freedom by active non-violent agitation and passive resistance to authority. The objects of the Passive Resistance Movement were :

1. *"To destroy the hypnotism that had caused the people and the country to have faith not only in the omnipotence of their rulers but also in their altruism."*

10. See Chirol : Indian Unrest pp. 11-14.

11. Ibid p. 14.

12. Ibid p. 11.

2. *"In the second place, the object was to create a passionate love of liberty, accompanied by a spirit of sacrifice and readiness to suffer for the cause of the country."*¹³

Passive resistance to authority was considered by all extremists as an effective weapon of agitation. It implied a programme of boycott of government officials, honours and services and it was justified as perfectly legitimate. About passive resistance, B. C. Pal said :

*"The administration may be made impossible in a variety of ways. It is not actually that every Deputy Magistrate should say : I won't serve it. It is not that when one man resigns nobody will be found to take his place. But if you create this spirit in the country the government service will gradually imbibe this spirit, and a whole office may go on strike.....We can reduce every Indian in government service to the position of a man who has fallen from the dignity of Indian citizenship."*¹⁴

But passive resistance was merely negative work and was not sufficient. Positive and constructive work was equally necessary. Their programme consequently included encouragement to Swadeshi through revival of Indian industries and boycott of foreign stuff, establishment of national system of education, and a national machinery of administration running quite independent of the existing government. In this sense, the extremists were advocates of constructive nationalism. We are tempted to quote again B. C. Pal, whose writings gave a coherent shape to the extremist ideology.

"Boycott both economic and political, boycott of foreign and especially British goods, and of all honorary associations with the administration, national education implying a withdrawal of the youths of the nation from the officialised universities and government controlled schools and colleges, and training them up in institutions conducted on national lines subject to national control and calculated to help the realization of the national destiny, national Civic Volunteering, aiming at imparting a healthy civic training to the

13. B. C. Pal quoted by Lajpat Rai : Young India pp. 162-163.

14. Chitrol : Indian Unrest pp. 11-12.

people by the voluntary assumption of as much of the civic duties, at present discharged by official or semi-official agencies, as could be done without a violation of the existing laws of the country—duties, for instance, in regard to rural sanitation, economic and medical relief, popular education, preventive police duties, regulation of fair and pilgrim gathering—settlement of civil and non-cognizable, criminal disputes by means of arbitration committees : These were the proclaimed methods of the Nationalist School".¹⁵

The evolution of the extremist political thought shows that by the end of the 19th century, India had acquired a definite standard of political individuality and resented despotism. It began to understand swaraj as its national right, no matter whether she was competent for it or not. It also appears that the extreme sections of Indian nationalism had not altogether discounted the possibility of using force for the ultimate seizure of power. Lajpat Rai writes :

*"They do not want the British to go until the people of India are sufficiently strong to turn them out by force, and are able to protect themselves and to maintain their independence and their liberties against the outside world."*¹⁶

THE REVOLUTIONARY SCHOOLS :—

It is not possible to dismiss the revolutionary movement as "the mad efforts of lads, dreaming of winning liberty for their country and succeeding only in committing a few useless crimes."¹⁷ Anarchic methods are certainly not helpful for smooth political progress and are symptoms of extreme distress and desperation. The cult of violent retaliation, it is also true, does not help the weaker combatant in the long run. But a nation which lies prostrate at the feet of the oppressors, suffers cruelty and wrongs is a nation of either opium-eaters or of lifeless skeletons. Nature does not let it survive for long. From time to time India made emphatic protests in the form of revolutionary

15. Lajpat Rai : Young India p. 163.

16. Ibid pp. 212-213.

17. Annie Besant : How India Wrought for Freedom p. 458.

outbursts which undoubtedly unnerved the Britisher. Lajpat Rai deals at length with the different schools of the physical force party during 1908-1914, in his book "Young India," published in America in 1917. They may be classified as Terrorists and Revolutionaries. We shall briefly analyse their doctrines.

TERRORISTS :—

The terrorists considered the British Government as a vicious institution founded on force and fraud. They felt no qualms of conscience in working for its destruction by violent means. They virtually declared a war against the government and appealed to all lovers of freedom :

*"Do not be led away by false hopes and temporary conciliations. Let not any conciliatory measure of the Government pacify you and scare you away from your path, Sacrifice white blood unadulterated and pure to your gods on the altar of freedom ; the bones of the martyrs are crying for vengeance, and you will be a traitor to your community if you do not adequately respond to the call."*¹⁸

The book—"Mukti Kon Pathe" (What is the path of salvation ?), spoken of as the gospel of Bengali terrorists, advocated shooting of Europeans and securing help of the Indian soldiers in this work. The subversion of British rule by violent means was enjoined as a sacred duty.¹⁹ Most of the terrorists in Bengal were either the followers of the Mother cult or Vedant. The former extolled the Sakti spirits as symbolizing the Motherland in different stages and conditions :

*"Jagatdhatri—riding a lion which has the prostrate body of an elephant under its paw, represented the motherland in the early jungle clearing stage. This is, says Bankim Chandra, the mother as she was. Kali, the grim goddess dancing on the prostrate form of Shiva, the God—this, says Bankim Chandra, is the mother as she is..... Durga, the ten-headed goddess, armed with swords and spears in some hands,.....riding a lion, fighting with demons.....this, says Bankim Chandra, is the mother as she will be."*²⁰

18. Montagu : On Indian Affairs p. 35.

19. Indian Sedition Committee Report pp. 18-19.

20. Lajpat Rai : Young India pp. 191-192.

Durga beckoned her devotees to strike down the white demons who were tormenting the children of the soil and playing havoc on their ancient culture and religion. The Vedantists derived their inspiration from the utterances and writings of Swami Vivekanand and the message of Lord Krishna preached in the Bhagavat-Gita. They worked for the salvation of their country with the bomb in one hand and the Bhagavat in the other. About the Mother-Worshippers and the Vedantists, Lajpat Rai writes, that they were religious men, with a remarkable sense of duty and honour and were true to their vows :

"They are neither nihilists nor anarchists. They are patriots who have raised their patriotism to the pitch of a religion. Their religion remarkably fits in with their patriotism and makes the latter indescribably intense and alive. Their whole life is permeated with it."²¹

An "exceedingly small" number of terrorists was that of nihilists, whom he calls an "immoral people." They had no moral or religious scruples and raised dacoity itself to the level of patriotism.²² The terrorists organised a campaign of the loot and destruction of government property. Any one who actively helped the government or sympathised with it was also considered by them as their enemy. They believed that their's was a holy mission, and that their nationalism entitled them to levy taxes and collect money by force. Hence their programme of political dacoities and assassinations, which ultimately brought them in conflict not only with the government but also with society. The excessive religious fervour of the terrorists also alarmed the Muslims and was resented by them. They formed a majority in Eastern Bengal and the Hindu-Muslim relations became exceedingly strained in that province.²³

REVOLUTIONARIES :—

They did not believe in individual murders or dacoities. Lajpat Rai writes about them :

"They are for organised rebellion, for tampering with the army, for raising the standard of revolt, and for carrying on a guerilla war. For the purposes of this rebellion

21. Ibid p. 194.

22. Ibid p. 189.

23. Indian Sedition Committee Report p. 17.

or war they may do and will do anything that is necessary to be done : but otherwise they would neither murder nor loot".²⁴

Har Dayal and most of the workers of the Ghadar party belonged to this school. According to them, life in political bondage is a negation of life. Life implies capacity to grow and develop and a slave or a bonds-man is not free to grow. He is at the mercy of the master, who is also his conscience-keeper. Man must, therefore, strive to free himself from bondage in the interests of his physical, moral, and spiritual growth. Life with respect and honour, with profit and advantage is possible only under freedom. They worked at subverting the government by organising internal revolts and causing disaffection in the army. For their arms and ammunition they relied on the cooperation of outside powers.

The political movement in India reveals the usual cleavage and differences in methods which are found in political struggles in every country. The physical force party was, however, not likely to prosper and succeed here. The government machinery was very strong and efficient and its system of espionage thorough. It was not difficult for it to hunt and exterminate the revolutionary pockets. The revolutionary doctrines did not also appeal to the people, who are liable to be lost in the maze of humanism and metaphysical abstractions. Nor was an attempt made to spread revolutionary teachings among the masses in the rural areas. Mr. Montagu considered the revolutionary agitation as mostly the work of discontented school masters and students.²⁵ The members of the Sedition Committee also write :

"Abundant evidence has compelled us to the conclusion that the secondary English schools, and in a less degree the colleges, of Bengal have been regarded by the revolutionaries as their most fruitful recruiting centres Probably the worst feature of the situation is the low wages and the complete absence of prospects which are the fate of teachers in secondary schools It is customary to trace the genesis of much sedition and crime to the back-streets and lanes of Calcutta and

24. Lajpat Rai : Young India p. 195.

25. On Indian Affairs, p. 33,

*Dacca, where the organisers of anarchic conspiracies seek their agents from among university students. This view is correct as far as it goes, but it is in the high schools, with their under-paid and discontented teachers, their crowded, dark and ill-ventilated class-rooms, and their soul-destroying process of unceasing cram, that the seeds of discontent and fanaticism are sown"*²⁶

Anarchism had no affinity with the main current of nationalist agitation. The latter was slowly developing and gathering momentum in the direction of passive resistance. Before the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi on the scene, the nationalist movement was exclusively a middle-class agitation with no sound popular support

PERSONALITIES :

BAL GANGADHAR TILAK (1856-1920) :—

He was a Chitpavan Brahman of Maharashtra and his father was a School Inspector in Poona. At the early age of twenty, he graduated with honours from the University of Bombay and began taking active part in the Deccan Education Society. Till 1890, he taught Jurisprudence in the Fergusson College of Poona. This year saw him on a parting of ways with his enlightened colleagues like Ranade, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Gokhale, Bhandarkar. He fell in with the orthodox circles and opposed the Age of Consent Bill for the removal of child-marriage. Through his writings in the 'Kesari', he denounced the reformers and acquired great popularity with the conservative elements of the population. With the help of the Nattu Brothers, he carried on vigorous propaganda that the Hindus were not to be a passive spectator of the degradation of their ancient institutions. In the later period, he took active part in the anti-cow-killing movement and organised annual festivals in honour of Ganesh, the elephant-headed god of wisdom. The Ganpati societies became very popular and trained the Hindu youth in gymnastic exercises. He gave great impetus to the movement of Hindu revivalism by initiating festivals in honour of Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha Swaraj. His influence rapidly expanded beyond the Deccan and at the Congress Sessions of 1905-1907, he was the hero of the extremist elements. On June 24, 1908, the government tried him in connection with

some of his articles on the Muzaffarpur bomb outrage on Miss and Mrs Kennedy. He was deported to Mandalay for six years. Here in the solitude of the Burmese prison, he completed his studies on the Vedas and the antiquity of the Aryans.²⁷ He was released in 1914 and the nation accorded him an enthusiastic welcome. In the later period, he bestrode the Congress like a Colossus and had he lived after 1920, he would certainly have been a formidable competitor with Mahatma Gandhi. He certainly had little sympathy with Gandhiji's reverence for moral order in a struggle against Imperialism. Montagu described him as "the politician who probably has the greatest influence of any person in India, and who is very extreme.....He was really the author of the Congress-League Scheme.....he is a scientific man of great erudition and training".²⁸

Tilak's estimate as a politician is a matter of controversy. The European writers pronounce severe judgement on him. They condemn his pro-Hindu bias and his campaign for the glorification of Hinduism. He was certainly not an idealist and a dreamer in politics. He awakened the Marathi spirit by organising Shivaji and Ganpati festivals. They formed a part of his political propaganda. His pro-Hindu ideas also underwent a substantial modification inside the Burmese walls. In his later career there is little to suggest communalism. His opposition to social reforms in his early career, too, appears to be born of political convictions. Kohn writes that he adopted Vivekanand's thesis :

*"I do not believe in reforms, I believe in growth.....India's first duty is to secure her freedom as a condition precedent to her social well-being."*²⁹

Even his critics admit that his "calculating resourcefulness and his indomitable energy", his masterfulness and his learning impressed all who came near him. He had tremendous capacity for organisational work and his house became "a place of pilgrimage for the disaffected from all parts of India." He taught India

27. Subhash Bose writes that when he was in the same prison after 1925, he heard amusing anecdotes about Tilak from the prison-staff and that equally interesting were "the lemon-trees which he had planted with his own hands". Indian Struggle p.185.

28. An Indian Diary p. 61.

29. History of Nationalism in the East, p. 373.

self-reliance and made it understand that the Britisher could be driven away by "a ceaseless and menacing agitation."³⁰ He popularised Swaraj and the cult of passive resistance. They were really the invention of his brain. Annie Besant describes him as "a statesman and a combatant against autocracy of the most military type..... He inherited the fiery traditions of his race, the Marathas, strong-brained, strong-armed, that warred against the great Mughal Empire, and, had India been awake, he might have played the part of a Cromwell."³¹

LALA LAJPAT RAI :—

Lajpat Rai was one of the most influential public men of his day. He founded the Anglo-Vedic College at Lahore and served there for a few years as a lecturer in History. He was a keen advocate of social and religious reforms and took prominent part in the Arya Samaj movement. He was a leading member of the Lahore bar, and an effective journalist. He founded the 'Punjabee', a leading English paper of the province and edited others. J. T. Sunderland, the American well-wisher of India, describes him as "an ardent patriot," "proud of his country, her civilization, her literature and her great place in World's history."³² He believed that India was destined to play leading role in World's affairs in the future. India's subjection deeply moved him and like Tilak he suffered intensely for his patriotism. In 1907, he was deported to Burma for six months on mere suspicion without trial. His only crime was that he was a nationalist, and worked for his country in open and fair ways. After his release, he filed suits against two papers, one of them was published in London, for publishing charges of sedition against him and he won both of them. After the Surat split, he worked with the moderates but the government would not leave him free. Throughout the War he was practically an exile and lived in America. He was allowed to return after the War, and he joined Mahatma Gandhi in the non-cooperation movement. The Congress policy of the appeasement of the Muslims, however, did not appeal to him and he drifted to the camp of the Hindu-minded nationalists.

30. Chirol : Indian Unrest p. 50, pp. 54-55

31. India : Bond or Free ? pp. 158-59

32. Foreword to Lajpat Rai's Young India pp. IX-X.

He died a martyr's death as the result of blows on his chest, while he was leading the boycott procession at Lahore against the Simon Commission. With his death passed away a stalwart fighter of India's freedom. We are informed that he was a very effective orator, and Chintamani places him along with Lloyd George. His speeches in Urdu had the capacity "for rousing the indignation of the masses" and producing "thrilling effect" upon their minds.³³

HAR DAYAL : —

He was born in a Kayastha family at Delhi in 1884. He had his early education in Missionary Schools under Christian influences. In 1903, he took his Master's degree in English from the Government College, Lahore. He stood first at the examination and secured almost full marks in most of the papers. He was awarded a Government Scholarship to proceed abroad for further education. At St. John's College, Oxford, he made his mark as an outstanding scholar. But here he developed strong anti-Western prejudices, resigned the scholarship and returned to India. There was a complete revolution in his mode of life and thought. Lajpat Rai writes :

*"He came to believe that the English were undermining Hindu character ; that their educational policy and methods had been designed to destroy Hinduism and to perpetuate the political bondage of the Hindus, by destroying their social consciousness and national individuality."*³⁴

He gave up the Western dress and dietary and adopted an ascetic mode of life. He preached revolutionary doctrines and his writings began to receive publicity. The government would not, however, allow him to work freely and in 1908, he decided to leave the land of his birth never to return. He travelled widely in Europe and his excellent knowledge of French and German made him intimate with the revolutionaries on the Continent. He finally settled in America and edited the paper 'Ghadr.' The Indian community settled in Canada and the two Americas was attracted towards his revolutionary teachings. The Ghadra party organised by him soon became quite popular and drew many revolutionary workers from India. He created an

33. Indian Politics Since the Mutiny p. 83.

34. Young India p. 196.

endowment fund in the California University to grant five scholarships to Indian students. In 1912, he accepted Professorship in the department of Philosophy in Stanford University. He was, however, discharged in the beginning of 1914 as he advocated Indo-German collaboration against England. On 16th March 1914, he was put under arrest by the U. S. A. government as an undesirable alien and anarchist. He was released on a security of 5000 dollars advanced by a Sikh, Gurumukh Singh, who risked his money for his safety. During his release on bail, Har Dayal managed to abscond to Switzerland. He persuaded the German authorities that cooperation with Indian revolutionaries would be very fruitful in shortening the War. He sent his comrades, and among them was Mahendra Pratap, to Afghanistan to work up trouble against the British. His party made many abortive attempts at inciting armed insurrections in India with German aid. After the defeat of Germany, he settled in Stockholm, where he was appointed a Professor of Indian languages in the University. He was then taken to London by Younghusband and he wrote many books. He died in Central America where he had gone on a lecture-tour. His whole life was one of restlessness and adventure, burning with a passion for his country. He was a radical Socialist and an advocate of organised rebellion. He believed that "as soon as England leaves India, some one will rise Sphinx-like, who will establish some form of national government. The time will produce the man."³⁵

ARABINDO GHOSH :—

He is the son of Dr. K. D. Ghosh, who retired as a government officer in the medical service. He had his education at St. Paul's School in London and then at the Cambridge University. In 1890, he competed successfully at the I. C. S. examination in England but was rejected for his failure at the riding test. "Never did a failure prove more a blessing than in his case", says Lajpat Rai³⁶ He returned to India and was appointed as the Vice-Principal of the Maharaja's College, Baroda, at a salary of 500 pounds sterling. He resigned in 1906, came to Calcutta and joined the staff of the 'Bande-mataram',

35. Ibid p. 203.

36. Ibid. p. 173.

started in August 1906. He also agreed to be the Principal of the National College on just ten pounds a month. But he came in conflict with the management, who dreaded the wrath of the bureaucracy and asked him to avoid politics. At that time, Arabindo thought that "Education could no more be divorced from politics than it could be divorced from religion and morals."³⁷ He left his connection with the institution and plunged deep into politics. He shot like a meteor in the public life of the province, and could very well say that he came, saw, and conquered Bengal. Plain living and high thinking was his ideal and he fell under the spell of Vedanta, in which he discovered a new path of India's salvation. An eminent intellectual and spiritualist, he was the soul of revolutionary agitation in Bengal. In 1908, he was charged along with his brother Barindra with conspiracy for waging war against the King. This was after the police discovered at Manick-tolla in Calcutta a bomb factory. It was in connection with his trial that C. R. Das rose into prominence at the bar. He ably argued that his client was an extremely religious man and that there was no taint of sedition in his writings and speeches. He could convince the judges that they were merely an exposition of the principles of Vedanta. He was acquitted but a new warrant was issued for his arrest in 1910. He evaded it by seeking shelter in the French Settlement at Pondicherry where he lives to this day like a Vedic seer. His poems and writings on Hindu philosophy and religion are a priceless heritage of modern India.

BEPIN CHANI RA PAL (1858-1932) :—

B. C. Pal was born on November 7, 1858 in the district of Sylhet in a very orthodox family. His father was working in the subordinate judicial service of the province. He had his higher education at Calcutta and while he was a student, he was very much impressed by Surendranath's stirring lectures to the Bengali youth on Mazzini and the Italian movement. He began cultivating politics in his college days and his rationalist frame of mind ultimately led him to sever his connection with his family. He accepted the Brahma-Samaj faith and incurred the resentment of his father. It was many years after that the father and the son could be reconciled. He left the

University in 1879 and served as a teacher in different provinces. He finally settled down in his province and made his mark in journalism. By 1905, he established his position as a radical political thinker. He was the leader of the Bengali radical wing in the Congress and fought for Tilak's candidature for Presidentship at the Calcutta and Surat Congresses of 1906-07. He is the founder of the modern school of passive resistance. He travelled widely in Europe and America and his intellectual keenness and brilliant writings won him wide recognition. He was "almost as much at home in London as in Calcutta."³⁸ His political views softened down with age and after the Reforms of 1919, he identified himself with the right wing of the Liberal Party. He could not fall in line with the Mahatma, whom he considered as a strategist of Indian Capitalism. He was an eminent orator of his times. Of Bepin Chandra's oratory, Pandit Nehru records his first impression while he was a student at Cambridge. Those were the days of the Tilakites and the firebrands of Bengal :

*"We met Bepin Pal in one of our sitting-rooms. There were only a dozen of us present but he thundered at us as if he was addressing a mass meeting of ten thousand. The volume of noise was so terrific that I could hardly follow what he was saying."*³⁹

The British Government and most of the moderates of that period also thought that Bepin Chandra's politics was more noisy than substantial. But noisy men are more successful in politics than quiet unostentatious workers.

38. Chirol : Indian Unrest p. 9.

39. Autobiography p. 22.

CHAPTER VIII

INDIA AND WORLD WAR I (1914-18)

The movement for Constitutional Reforms—Home Rule agitation—The Congress—League Concordat 1916—The revolutionary activity—the August Announcement and after—Secession of liberals.

The mad race for armaments and colonial possessions among European powers ultimately plunged them in a war which was the first of its kind as it was global in its character and consequences. As an appendage of the British Empire, India was directly involved in it. The war began with Austria's attack upon Serbia after the murder of an Austrian Arch-duke in June 1914 by an Austrian subject of the Serb race. Germany backed Austria and soon after all the European powers were dragged into the conflict. In the following month, the lamps were fast going out all over Europe, to use the words of Lord Grey, and it appeared that they would not be lit again within the life-time of a generation. France, Russia and England immediately took up the challenge of German militarism and America followed later. The war lasted for four dreadful years of slaughter on large scale leaving the fields of Europe bleaching with the bones of the dead.

Throughout the war India was governed by Defence Ordinances and the common man had little sympathy for the British. It is, however, significant that there was nothing like vigorous anti-British agitation. On the other hand, the British Government received remarkable co-operation from the Indian leaders in the prosecution of the war. When the war broke out, Britain cried for India's help. Asquith, the British Prime Minister, made a pronouncement that in future Indian questions were to be viewed from a "different angle of vision". He held out the promise of self-government as a reward of India's loyalty. Soon after, Lloyd George declared that the principle of self-determination was to be applied

"in tropical countries also". Then America joined the Allies in June 1917 and President Wilson proclaimed that the war was to make "the world fit for free men to live in". The success of Germany was painted as the success of brute force over democracy and Indian politicians were swayed by the promises of the Allies. They appealed to the people for co-operation with British authorities. About his loyalist campaign, Surendranath Banerjea writes :

*"The key-note of my address was that self-government, which was the goal of our political aspirations, connoted self-defence, and that, if we sought the privileges of Imperial citizenship, we must bear its burdens and responsibilities, and the foremost among them was to fight for the defence of the Empire. The appeal went home, and in not one of the numerous meetings that were held was there a single dissentient voice heard."*¹

Mahatma Gandhi of South Africa reputed was at London at the time of the outbreak of the war, and after reaching India, he actively pleaded for India's support to the Allies. He writes :

*"Was it not the duty of the slave, seeking to be free, to make the master's need his opportunity? This argument failed to appeal to me.....If we would improve our status through the help and cooperation of the British it was our duty to win their help by standing by them in their hour of need."*²

Lord Hardinge, who continued to work as the Viceroy during the first three years of the war, lost no time in equipping a magnificent expeditionary force of 290,000 troops to France and Egypt. This force was three times the size of the American army before the war. Out of this, only 80,000 were British. In 1917, India supplied about 285,000 soldiers for the Allied campaigns and in 1918 about half a million men. India's contribution to the war effort in money was equally substantial. In his evidence before the Mesopotamia Commission in July 1917, Lord Hardinge summed up India's contribution to the war as follows :

*"The Imperial Government allowed India to be bled absolutely white during the first weeks of war."*³

1, A Nation in Making pp. 300-301.

2, The Story of my Experiments with Truth pp. 424-25.

: India's Silent Revolution, pp. 11-12.

India came to the rescue of the Allies at a critical moment of the war. These were her sons, who checked the advance of the Germans and humbled the pride of Kaiser, who boasted that he would "dine in Paris in a fortnight." The members of the British Parliament sprang to their feet when they learnt about Indian army's successful resistance to the German forces. General Sir James Willocks writes in his book—"With the Indians in France," as follows:

*"The day is past when that great portion of our Empire could be kept in comparative darkness, the light is dawning, and the Great war has opened to her an opportunity which she never had before. Her sons have shared the glory of the Empire."*⁴

The war raised India's expectations and quickened her political consciousness. There was a new sense of pride in her realisation that her influence counted in deciding the fate of European powers. It gave impetus to the movement for constitutional reforms and India framed her demand for freedom in definite terms. The war also bridged the gulf between the moderates and the extremists, the Hindus and the Muslims, and brightened up political life. The war also provided an opportunity to the militant section of Indian nationalism, which had gone underground or abroad, to make attempts at the violent overthrow of British rule. We shall examine these developments at length.

HOME RULE AGITATION :—

The war stimulated constitutional agitation for reforms and infused new life in the Congress movement. At the 29th Congress Session of Madras in 1914, Bhupendranath Basu in his Presidential address expressed satisfaction that Britain and India were fighting together in the cause of honour, liberty, and justice. He then made a passionate plea for radical reform of the Indian administration. It was, said he, vested in a foreign bureaucracy and all the great departments were under English control. The superior services were almost entirely in the hands of foreigners. In the Indian Civil Service, out of a cadre of 1400 men, there were only 70 Indians. There were only one

Indian in the Viceroy's Executive Council and two at the India Office. India was a nation of assistants and was not content with its lot. She aspired to be a free partner in the Commonwealth of Nations. "If the English rule in India meant the canonisation of a bureaucracy, if it meant perpetual domination and perpetual tutelage, an increasing dead weight on the soul of India", said he, "it would be a curse to civilization and a blot on humanity".⁵ It was at this session, that Mrs. Annie Besant showed her interest in Indian politics. She was a prominent worker of the Theosophical Society and Hindu Educational Movement. Through the grab of her tongue, her organising ability and her charming personality, she soon made her mark in the Congress. She spoke that India was not content "to be any longer a child in the nursery of the Empire" and wanted her freedom. She ridiculed all talk of a reward due to her loyalty and proclaimed :

"India does not chaffer with the blood of her sons and the proud tears of her daughters in exchange for so much liberty, so much right. India claims the right, as a Nation, to justice among the peoples of the Empire. India asked for this before the War. India asks for it during the War. India will ask for it after the War, but not as a reward but as a right does she ask for it. On that there must be no mistake".⁶

Annie Besant put herself at the head of constitutional agitation and worked hard to effect a unity between the two wings of the Congress, which had parted company at Surat. In 1914, Tilak also passed the period of internment at Mandalay and came back to the country on the crest of popular enthusiasm. With his release political life acquired fresh vitality. Annie Besant's cry for Home Rule as India's right appealed to the Extremists and her insistence on constitutional means of agitation attracted the moderates. She came to the forefront of the Congress politics. The death of Gokhale in Feb. 1915 and of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta nine months later weakened the moderate wing and provided field for new spirits and new enterprises. At Madras Session of 1914, she carried out an amendment to the Congress

5, Annie Besant : How India wrought for freedom pp. 573-575.

6, Ibid, p, 580,

constitution, by which associations which on Dec., 31, 1915 were in existence for two years, and which had attainment of Dominion Status through constitutional means as their object, could send delegates to the Congress Session of 1916. This facilitated the entry of the extremists and united the two wings at the Lucknow Session.

AIMS AND OUTLOOK OF ANNIE BESANT :—

The moderates had forfeited the confidence of the country and if the extremists who were outside the Congress joined hands with the terrorists, there could be a hell for the Britisher in India. Annie Besant's concern for England's interests made her put on the garb of a radical Indian patriot and keep the country on the safe track of constitutional agitation. "Her plan was to disentangle the nationalist extremists from their compromising alliance with the Revolutionaries," truly states Dr. Zacharias, and "to reconcile them to a position within the British Empire, and to bring them with the Moderates into line in a reunited Congress."⁷ She herself declared :

*"One thing that lies very near to our hearts is to draw Great Britain and India nearer to each other by making known in Great Britain something of Indian movements, and of the men who will influence from here the destinies of the Empire."*⁸

In her visits to England during 1908-1914, she was impressed with Redmond's Home Rule League and she tried to form an Indian Home Rule party in the Parliament. She did not succeed but she conducted propaganda in England in favour of self-government to India. She set up a Home Rule League and convened a crowded meeting in Queen's Hall, London, in the spring of 1914, with Earl Brassey in the chair. She considered it absurd that India's loyalty to the Empire should be "unconditional" and declared that the price of her loyalty was her freedom. Mr. M. A. Jinnah and Lajpat Rai supported her. On her return to India, she started a similar movement. She founded at Madras a weekly paper, the 'Commonweal', and six months later a daily "New India". Its first issue was published on July 14 (1914), the day of the fall of the Bastille. These papers formed

7. *Renascent India* p. 165.

8. *India : Bond or Free ?* p. 163.

the battery of the Home Rule Movement. She explained her mission as the awakener of India. "I am an Indian tomtom", said she, "waking up all the sleepers so that they may wake and work for their Motherland."⁹ In her opinion, there was no country in the world like India, with such a past, no country that could look forward to such a future. The theme of her utterances was that only free India could defend the interests of the Empire. Indians could have no love of the Empire so long as they were not treated as free partners in it. Their love of liberty and hope of winning it alone could inspire them to fight zealously for England. India wanted self-rule, as a free and contented India was the strongest bulwark of the Empire. A nation in bondage is a nation of cattle and not of human beings. The fate of the British Empire, she said, "hinges on the fate of India and therefore it is but wisdom and prudence to keep India contented by granting Home Rule to her". India was "a tremendous reservoir of man-power, far greater than America," and a Home-Ruled India was an asset to the Empire in its struggle against German militarism.¹⁰ In the first issue of the 'Commonweal', she stated her political aims as follows :

*"In Political Reform we aim at the building up of complete Self-Government from Village Councils, through District and Municipal Boards and Provincial Legislative Assemblies, to a National Parliament, equal in its powers to the legislative bodies of the Self-Governing Colonies, by whatever names they may be called; also at the direct representation of Imperial Parliament, when that body shall contain representatives of the Self-Governing States of the Empire."*¹¹

PROGRESS OF AGITATION :—

At the Bombay session of 1915, Annie Besant pressed the Congress to consider the formation of a Home Rule League to carry on propaganda for self-government. But the general feeling among the Moderates was, writes Surendranath, that "such an organisation would serve to overlap and perhaps

9. Levett, V. : A History of the Indian Nationalist Movement p. 107.

10. Annie Besant, Builder of India, Theosophical Publishing House, pp. 75-84.

11. India : Bond or Free ? pp. 162-163.

weaken the Congress. The Home Rule League was not then formed."¹² At the Lucknow Congress of 1916, She was the most influential leader and was joined by the contingent of nationalists under Tilak, who was received with tremendous applause. After the Lucknow Session both worked together and conducted propaganda for Home Rule. They were convinced of the need of a separate organisation as the moderates would not countenance a move of popular education.

At the beginning of the year 1917, Mrs Besant started in Madras a Home Rule League with Dr. Subramaniya, a retired judge of the High Court, as its President. In a few weeks, all the Theosophical organisations controlled by Mrs. Besant helped to establish its branches all over the country. In the Bombay Presidency, Tilak started similar organisation. He went round asking the British how long were they to teach India still and was it not the time for them to leave. He repudiated the British charge that Indians were not fit to carry on administration, and said that before the advent of the English Government, Indians did not kill one another and there was no disorder everywhere. With their progress in science and knowledge they were now fully competent to manage their affairs and wanted Swaraj. The movement spread rapidly among the intelligentsia. But what really made it popular was the internment of Mrs. Besant. Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, yielded to the pressure of the Madras Govt., and interned her with two of her associates, G S. Arundale and B. P. Wadia. The result was that there was vigorous agitation to get her out of prison. The atmosphere, writes Pandit Nehru, became electric and "most of us young men felt exhilarated and expected big things in the future".¹³ The action of the Government popularised the cause of the Home Rule Leagues as it impressed the educated classes that the Government was not favourably inclined towards any agitation for self-government. It discredited the Liberals all the more in public eye and "set in motion the impulse that placed Mrs. Besant in the presidential chair of the Congress."¹⁴ All the Provincial Congress Committees unani-

12. A Nation in Making p. 237.

13. Autobiography p. 31.

14. Surendranath : A Nation in Making p. 239.

mously elected her as the President for the forth-coming session of 1917. It was at this time that the question of passive resistance, which Gandhiji had tried in South Africa, was also mooted out in political circles. She was, however, released in time.

In the later period, the Home Rule agitation could not develop to a high pitch and remained purely a constitutional affair without touching the masses. The upper section of the educated middle-class was hardly interested in active agitation and sincerely believed that something must come out of the promises of the British statesmen after the War. The bourgeoisie was another enlightened section which could have pushed up the agitation. But the war raised its profits high and the government, too, tried to conciliate it. In 1916, the British Government increased the import duty on cotton to $7\frac{1}{2}\%$, without increasing the excise duty on cotton manufactured in India. The war hampered British industry and the tariffs of the government afforded protection to Indian industries against Japanese and American manufactures. Indian mill-owners were busy turning out materials for the defence of the Empire and the conduct of the war in Egypt, Palestine and East Africa. They were working on government contracts for the equipments of the armed forces. There was also an indication that British Imperialism was abandoning its attitude of hostility to national industries. In his despatch to the Secretary of State dated 26th Nov. 1915, Lord Hardinge wrote :

*"Manufacturers, politicians and the literate public have for long been pressing their demands for a definite and accepted policy of state aid to Indian industries ; and the demand is one which evokes the sympathy of all classes of Indians whose position or intelligence leads them to take any degree of interest in such matters."*¹⁵

By his telegram, dated 1st Feb. 1916, Lord Crewe authorised the Government of India "to instruct Local Governments that in cases in which they desire to help particular industries they may do so, subject to your approval and to financial exigencies, without being unduly restricted by my predecessor's rulings"¹⁶ Thus the British Government was now prepared to act on the

15. Report of the Industrial Commission 1916-17, p. 265.

16. Ibid. p. 263.

policy of state aid to industries, which was rejected by Lord Morley unequivocally in 1910. The war demonstrated in a blatant manner India's dependence upon countries outside the Empire for the supply of most of the necessities of life. The Government was, therefore, prepared to revise its industrial policy. In 1916, it also constituted a commission to consider and report upon the possibility of further industrial development in the country. When the Home Rule movement was in full swing, Mr. E. S. Montagu, a liberal statesman, took charge as Secretary of State. The constitutional announcements of the British Government during his period created a favourable impression in the country and knocked the bottom out of the movement. We shall examine these separately as they have a vital bearing on the evolution of Indian polity and led to a serious cleavage in the Congress movement. It must, however, be emphasised here that the Home Rule movement enlivened the dull political atmosphere and roused the self-respect of the nation. It was an assertion of the equality of human rights and advanced the political cause of the country. The idea of Home Rule was quite old but the war gave to it the substance of reality and a new significance.

THE CONGRESS-LEAGUE CONCORDAT, 1916 :—

Before the War, the pan-Islamic influence caused a swing in the Muslim political outlook. The war actually saw England fighting against the Sultan of Turkey, the Caliph of Islam. Great Britain, however, made a declaration that the Holy places of Arabia and sacred shrines of Mesopotamia would be immune from the attack of the Allies so long as Indian pilgrims were not molested. But the Muslim sentiment was very much disturbed when the British Government expressed sympathy with the Arab rebels under the Grand Sharif of Mecca, who revolted against the Sultan. The authors of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, 1918, truly observe that

"The crumbling of Islamic Kingdoms in Morocco and Persia had led Indian Muhammedans to cling more closely than ever to Turkey as the great surviving Muslim power in the world ; and when Turkey was threatened first by Italy and then by the Balkan League the excited fancy of many Indian Muslims saw in these events a concerted

plot of the Christian Powers to make an end of Islam as a temporal power'',¹⁷

Turkey's war against England was considered in the orthodox circles as a 'Jihad' and Indian Muslims drifted towards nationalism. The nationalist leaders exploited their resentment and the combination of religion and politics easily forged a united front. The League and the Congress composed their differences and presented a joint demand for self-government.

Sir William Wedderburn, the President of the 25th Congress at Allahabad, started the move towards communal and political unity. From the British point of view, it was most desirable that the Muslim intelligentsia was brought under the influence of the Congress and kept away from the contamination of the inspired soldiers of the Khilafat. The League also adopted the ideal of self-government for India as its creed and prepared the ground for harmonious co-operation with the Congress. H. H. the Aga Khan, who was the permanent President of the League ever since its foundation, left his connection with it in 1915 and even stopped his contribution. There was no doubt now regarding the nationalist outlook of the League. A very important step towards national unity was taken by Mr. M. A. Jinnah and his friends who invited the Muslim League to hold its annual sessions at the same time and places as of the Congress. At their Bombay sessions of 1915, there was plenty of fraternisation between them and most of the Congress leaders attended the League session. They also resolved to co-operate in formulating a common scheme of post-War reforms and appointed committees for drafting it. In 1916, both the associations held their sessions at Lucknow and almost at the same time. They adopted the joint scheme of reforms, known as the Congress League Pact and pressed it on the government as a united national demand. The proceedings of the Lucknow Congress of 1916 constitute a landmark in the history of the Congress movement. They were a vindication of the principles for which Tilak and his comrades had been persecuted at the time of the Minto-Morley Reforms. The Moderates now accepted them without reservation and yielded place to those whom they had dreaded as extremists. The Hindu-Muslim *reapprochment* was also a significant develop-

ment of Indian politics. The bureaucracy could not completely ignore it and intensify agitation. It recognised the political union achieved in Dec., 1916 as "an impressive demonstration of willingness" on the part of the Hindu and Muslim leaders to sink their differences for a common end. The Congress-League scheme was "the latest, most complete, and most authoritative presentation of the claims of the leading Indian political organisations." It was "worthy of praise as testimony to the growing force of a national feeling."¹⁸

The scheme was a modification of the memorandum on reforms drawn up by 19 elected members of the Imperial Legislative Council and submitted to Lord Chelmsford in Oct., 1916. "What is wanted," said the Memorandum, "is not merely good government or efficient administration, but a government acceptable to the people, because responsible to them. This is what India understands would constitute a new angle of vision. If after the war the position of India remains practically what it was before, the beneficent effects of participation in common danger overcome by common effort will leave nothing behind, save the painful memory of unrealized expectations."¹⁹ The Congress-League Scheme had five parts. Part I dealt with the constitution and functions of the Provincial Legislative Councils and recommended election of four-fifths of members on a broad franchise. The Provincial Council was to have full authority to deal with all matters affecting the internal administration of the Province. The Governor had the veto power but if a resolution was "again passed by the Council after interval of not less than one year, it must be given effect to." Part II dealt with the constitution of the Provincial Executives. Part III dealt with the composition and powers of the Imperial Legislative Council. It was to possess full financial and fiscal powers and powers of control over all-India subjects and inter-provincial matters. Part IV dealt with the constitution and powers of the Government of India consisting of the Governor-General and the Executive Council, half the members of which were to be elected by the Legislative Council's elected members

18. Ibid p. 126, 131.

19. Zacharias, H.C.E. : *Re nascent India* p.168.

Part V dealt with the Secretary of State and his Council.²⁰

This was India's demand for Home Rule. It visualised a form of government in which the people could control a nominated and irremovable executive through their representatives in the legislature. Its important feature was that the Muslims agreed to Swaraj and Hindus to communal electorate for the Muslims. The Muslims were also conceded slightly higher representation than their numbers. The following was to be their representation in the different Provincial Councils against their proportion in the population according to the census of 1911 :

	REPRESENTATION	POPULATION
Punjab	50%	54·8%
U. P.	30%	14%
Bengal	40%	52·7%
Bihar and Orissa	25%	10·6%
Central Provinces	15%	4·1%
Madras	15%	6·6%
Bombay	33 $\frac{1}{8}$ %	20·4%

The pact was essentially a bargain between the leaders of the upper classes of the two communities and had no popular basis of support. It hardly prescribed any programme of action in case it was not accepted by the British Government. By accepting communal electorate, the Congress compromised its nationalism with communalism and gave sanction to the British policy of dividing the two communities. The Congress could insist on joint electorate while conceding the principle of separate representation. The Lucknow pact afforded no guarantee that communal differences in future would not disturb the harmony of the nationalist melody. On the other hand, it was a clear indication of the fact that the two communities were still suspicious of each other and were very far from achieving unity of political interest. It is difficult to refute the observation of Garra that

*"The so-called Lucknow pact, which accepted the principle of separate electorates, Muslim and Non-Muslim, was made without the slightest thought for consequences..."*²¹

20. See Appendix II, Curtis, L : Letters on Responsible Govt. pp. 163—166.

21. An Indian Commentary p. 179.

REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY:—

After the outbreak of hostilities, Germany and Turkey endeavoured to foment disaffection in India. They enlisted most of the members of the Ghadr party and others who could be available to do their job. Already in 1911, Bernhardt in his book, "Germany and the Next War", had expressed the hope that the Bengali Hindus, tinctured with revolutionary mentality, may unite with Muslim rebels and shake England's foundations in India. The German Foreign Office entrusted the work of anti-British propaganda to a young Tamil, Chempakaraman Pillai, President of the International Pro-India Committee in Zurich. At Berlin he established an Indian Nationalist Party which included among its workers Har Dayal and many Bengali revolutionaries. Early in 1914, Khalil Khalid Beg, the Turkish Consul-General, also visited Lahore and presented to the Badshahi mosque a carpet sent by the Sultan in token of his gratitude to the Muslims of India. Soon after, two Turkish doctors of the Red Crescent Society visited the Punjab. They succeeded in pulling a few hot-headed Punjabi Muslims to the revolutionary camp.

Thus was established a direct link between the revolutionaries in India and abroad and there appears to be some amount of traffic in arms between Germany, India, and Siam. In August, 1914, the Bengal revolutionary party got hold of a large consignment of pistols and ammunition at Calcutta. They devised a plan of armed risings but the police got scent of it. It arrested the ring leaders and the plan came to nothing beyond some bomb-throwing and firing here and there. The government, however, apprehended greater trouble from the Sikhs and the Punjabis settled abroad and affected by the propaganda of the Ghadr party. The Sikhs were especially annoyed at the immigration rules framed by the Canadian government. Most of those, who were settled in Canada, sailed back to India but the wide powers assumed by the government successfully dealt with the revolutionary ferment caused by their arrival. Those who were settled in the Far East chartered the Komagatu Maru and tried to force a landing in Canada. They were disappointed and they decided to return to India. They landed at Budge-Budge on Sept. 1914 and were welcomed by the police and the

military. They defied arrest and in the scuffle which ensued many of them were killed and most of them put under arrest. These incidents created some sensation in India but could not disturb the even tenor of constitutional agitation.

The attempts in India proving futile, the focus of revolutionary activity shifted to the frontier areas and Afghanistan. In Aug., 1915, a certain Maulvi Obeidulla, a Sikh-convert, trained as a Maulvi in the U. P., crossed the frontier with some of his comrades to lead an anti-British and pan-Islamic movement. He proceeded to Kabul and was greeted by the members of the Turko-German mission and Indian revolutionaries. They worked out a plan for the overthrow of British rule in India. They aimed at an attack upon the North-Western frontier, to be followed by a Muslim rising in India. Before the attack was launched and the British Government overthrown, they set up a provisional government of free India. Mahendra Pratap, who had joined Har Dayal, was appointed as its President. Barkatulla, a friend of Krishnavarma, was the Prime Minister and Obeidulla found his place as one of the ministers. The provisional government despatched letters to the Governor of the Russian Turkistan and the Czar, pressing them to throw off their alliance with Great Britain. The letter to the Czar was inscribed on a gold-plate. They could not, however, do much besides propaganda. They merely wasted money and words in placating the Czar, who was soon to be a prisoner in his own home-land. As for the government of Afghanistan, a few of the Indian regiments stationed in the frontier were more than a match to its rabble. Germany was far away from the Indian theatre and without command of the seas, it could not organise resistance against the British in India. The revolutionary activity did not at all impress the Indian politicians who had grown grey in practical wisdom. The intelligent sections of society were also not enamoured of Kaiser and his romantic visions of a World-Empire.²²

22. For details of the revolutionary activity consult Ch. VII on German plots—Report of the Sedition Committee, 1918. There is some information on the subject in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report on Constitutional Reforms, 1918, pp. 18-24.

THE AUGUST' ANNOUNCEMENT AND AFTER :—

If the British managed to keep India quiet at a very critical stage of the war, it was not because of their security measures and defence regulations. The war discredited the old colonial system and they realized the need of a vital modification in the structure of the government of India. The failure of the Mesopotamian campaign against Turkey and the fall of Kut on April 29, 1915 was an eye-opener to the British authorities. The British War Office had to take up the direction of the campaign from the Government of India. The Parliament clamoured for an enquiry and the Mesopotamian Commission reported on the causes of the failure of the expedition in May 1917. The report was a severe verdict on the competence of the Indian Government. In the debates in the House of Commons on the report of the Commission, Mr. E. S. Montagu, who had worked as the Under-Secretary of State from Feb. 1910 to Feb. 1914, was outspoken in his criticism. He said :

*"It is the Government of India alone which does not seem capable of transformation, and I regard that as based upon the fact that the machinery is statute, written machinery. The Government of India is too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too antediluvian, to be any use for the modern purposes we have in view."*²³

He pleaded for "bigger opportunities" to Indians for controlling their own destinies, "not merely by councils which cannot act, but by control, by growing control, of the Executive itself." He said :

*"Unless you are prepared to remodel, in the light of modern experience, the century old and cumbrous machine, then I believe, I verily believe, that you will lose your right to control the destinies of the Indian Empire"*²⁴

His speech was not merely a parliamentary juggler's trick for applause. It was born of a sincere conviction that the reactionary and centralised machinery of the Indian government required an over-hauling. Lloyd George set aside Chamberlain, who knew little about India and appointed Montagu as the Secretary of State. His appointment was welcomed throughout

India as indicating big constitutional changes. Soon after followed his announcement of Aug. 20, 1917, which thrilled the intelligentsia. He stated the objects of British policy as increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration "and the gradual development of Self-Governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". He, however, made it plain that full self-government was not contemplated in the immediate future but that substantial steps in that direction would be taken as soon as possible. The progress in this policy was to be "achieved by successive stages" and the British government "must be judges of the time and measure of each advance"²⁵ This announcement was soon followed by a dramatic declaration that he would visit India accompanied by a deputation to hold consultations with Indian leaders. Surendranath writes that it was sufficient to gag the mouths of "the sceptics" as it was a "memorable departure from the old official ways". "The pages of Anglo-Indian history were strewn with the fragments of broken promises", he writes, "but perhaps a new chapter was now to be opened."²⁶ When the deputation arrived in India in Nov. 1917, even Tilak and Dr. Besant rushed to Delhi to invite Montagu to the coming Congress session at Calcutta. He was impressed by Annie Besant's "silvery quiet voice," and his vanity was sufficiently touched when "the renowned Tilak" garlanded him. He felt like "dashing down to the Congress and saving the whole situation", but was prevented by "the intransigence" of the Government of India.²⁷ He was overwhelmed by deputations from different parties and associations and was very much impressed by M. A. Jinnah, who led the Congress-League deputation. He writes about him as "young, perfectly mannered, impressive-looking, armed to the teeth with dialectics, and insistent upon the whole of his scheme." He further observes :

*"Jinnah is a very clever man, and it is, of course, an outrage that such a man should have no chance of running the affairs of his own country."*²⁸

25. Montagu-Chelmsford Report p. 5.

26. A Nation in Making p. 303.

27. Montagu, E.S : An Indian Diary pp. 58-59.

28. Ibid pp. 57-58.

SECESSION OF THE LIBERALS :—

Owing to the growing popularity of the Extremists and the election of Annie Besant as the President, the Liberals stayed away from the Calcutta Congress of 1917. The publication of the Montford Reforms scheme in July 1918 caused permanent split between the two groups. The scheme outlined a four-fold reform :

- (1) Local bodies were to be under popular control.
- (2) Element of responsibility to be introduced in the Provincial Councils.
- (3) Opportunity of influencing the government at the Centre to be provided without responsibility.
- (4) Slight relaxation in the control of the Secretary of State over the Indian Government.

With the war drawing to a close the ideas of Mr. Montagu appear to have undergone considerable modification. Formerly he probably aspired to produce something "epoch-making" which was to be "the key-stone of the future history of India."²⁹ He now came out merely with a dignified scheme of the decentralisation of authority. It relieved the Central Government of much of the headache of provincial administration. The device of dyarchy in the provinces and the reform of the legislature in the Centre were the reward of India's loyalty to the Crown. The Report clearly emphasised that time had not yet come when the Central Government might undergo much change without inviting danger and loss of efficiency. It accepted the proposals of the Congress-League scheme only in regard to the proportion of the Hindu and Muslim members in the various Councils. The Govt. of India remained as usual wholly responsible to the Secretary of State and vested in the hands of his superior agents.

The scheme fell far short of the hopes raised by the War and the Home Rule agitation. The extremist press and leaders denounced it. Tilak said that it was entirely unacceptable. "The scheme is ungenerous for England to offer and unworthy for India to accept", wrote Annie Besant in her paper, 'New India.' Others belonging to their camp condemned the scheme in equally emphatic terms. "It is so radically wrong", said they, "alike in

principle and in detail that it is impossible to modify or improve it."³⁰ The Anglo-Indian press, however, considered the proposals as nothing short of revolutionary changes. The political atmosphere was tense and there was acute controversy all over the country. A special session of the Congress was convened at Bombay in Aug. 1918 to consider the proposals. The 'moderates' did not attend it as they were eager to give them a trial. The Nationalist Party condemned the whole range of the Montford scheme but the moderates wanted to save it from wreckage due to unanimous opposition. According to them it promised the beginnings of responsible government. Their argument was that British Democracy would drop it, if all sections of politicians rejected it. They also intended to organise a deputation to England to influence the Parliamentary Committee. It was thus on the issue of the Reforms that the 'moderates' and the 'extremists' parted company for ever. The difference between them was fundamental. The 'moderates' held a separate conference in Bombay in November, 1918 under the Presidentship of Surendranath and constituted themselves as a separate body—the Indian National Liberal Federation. The Conference accepted the reforms, as they provided an opportunity for "peaceful, orderly and progressive realization of responsible government." "They were not inclined to follow", writes Surendranath, "the dubious paths of a revolutionary programme, with its endless risks and uncertain triumphs." They believed in an evolutionary movement culminating in complete self-rule.³¹ They took part in the General Elections under the new scheme fixed for Nov.-Dec., 1920 in the midst of the campaign of non-cooperation initiated by Gandhiji.

30, Cited in Surendranath : A Nation in Making p. 303.

31, Ibid , 313.

PART III

THE GANDHIAN PERIOD—THE PERIOD OF CONSTRUCTIVE NATIONALISM AND MASS MOVEMENTS, (1919—47).

"Ireland may gain its freedom by violence. Turkey may regain her lost possessions by violence within a measurable distance of time. But India cannot win her freedom by violence for a century, because her people are not built in the manner of other nations. They have been nurtured in the traditions of suffering."

—Mahatma Gandhi in 1920.

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"The Indian struggle is an open conspiracy against British rule."

Jawaharlal Nehru—The Presidential address to the Lahore Congress 1929.

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"Forget not that the greatest curse for a man is to remain a slave. Forget not that the greatest crime is to compromise with injustice and wrong."

Subhas Chandra Bose in his letter to the Governor of Bengal dated 26th Nov., 1940, announcing his resolve to undertake fast unto death.

CHAPTER IX

THE PUNJAB WRONGS, KHILAFAT AND NON-COOPERATION.

The War and the new nationalism—Mahatma Gandhi—The Rowlatt Bills and Satyagraha movement—Martial Law in the Punjab—The Khilafat Agitation—Tussle in the Congress—Progress of the Non-Cooperation Movement—Suspension of the movement.

THE WAR AND THE NEW NATIONALISM :—

The first World War exalted India's status in the Councils of the Empire but left bitterness at home. India was placed on a *defacto* equality with other Dominions at the Peace Conference and was represented by Montagu, the Secretary of State, and two Indians, S. P. Sinha, the Under-Secretary of State, and the Maharaja of Bikaner. This, however, did not solve the internal problem. The Reforms falsified expectations of big constitutional changes and disappointed the educated classes. They, in a sense, conceded nothing vital as they gave the ministers responsibility without power and the legislatures power without responsibility. The capitalist class, which had prospered during the war, was unhappy at their fiscal provisions. There was nothing in them to suggest that it could influence India's industrial and commercial policies. At the end of the war the Muslims of India were also very much irritated, nervous and patriotic. The subversion of the Ottoman Empire, the humiliation of the Sultan of Turkey distressed them very much. With the masses the forceful methods of recruitment had only left bitter memories of humiliation and insults. Mr. Garraat cites an instance of how a recruiting party forcibly picked up a boy for service in the army at a railway station where he had gone to leave his mother. That young Maratha boy was later on court-marshalled for deserting his regiment.¹ The methods of collecting money for the Red Cross were also highly objectionable. Retrenchment and demobilisation after the

1. An Indian Commentary, pp. 142-143.

war further served to intensify discontent. The country was also in the grip of acute economic depression and,

*"The wave of unrest, which swept through the country after the war, was totally unlike any of the earlier periods of agitation. It showed itself in many different ways ; in the clamour against the Sedition Act which led to the tragedy of Amritsar ; in the Khilafat movement which induced hundreds of hard working Mohammedan ryots to sell all they had and move into Afghanistan ; in the recrudescence of political dacoities and murders in Bengal ; in the non-cooperation movement led by Mr. Gandhi."*²

The war also stirred India, awakened her to her importance and swelled her national pride. The industrialists and the merchants realized bluntly that the difficulties of England during the war were their gain. These stalwarts of national resources now became active advocates of Home Rule for the country. Annie Besant writes in this connection:

*"The merchant class began to see that Home Rule would be to them an immense advantage, and this explains why a little later, they contributed largely to Mr. Gandhi's movement, which they mistakenly supposed would bring Home Rule."*³

The active interest of the industrial and the merchant class in politics strengthened the financial basis of the nationalist agitation and the Congress became a powerful organisation. It was, however, also a counter revolutionary development in the sense that this class was not a partisan of revolutionary struggle. It would not permit the national urge for retaliation against British misrule to develop beyond the limits of safety. The war was also an education to the masses. The soldiers who had fought in the boggy fields of Flanders, the desert sands of Egypt and the burning plains of Mesopotamia were drawn from the rural areas. On their return to their homes they told their relations and friends the thrilling stories of their varied experiences. They also told them how they had marched through London and other European towns and were cheered, honoured and entertained by baffled crowds of white men. While they

2. Ibid p. 146.

3. India: Bond Or Free p. 182.

were fighting for their masters, their sisters, mothers, and wives had learnt to read and write letters to them and inquire about them from the literate section of society. The rustic lad, who formerly walked barefooted and almost naked, now returned in a military uniform, decorated with medals, a smart upright figure. He would be given a quiet hearing by the illiterate folk clinging to him devotedly, when he preached them sermons on cleanliness and good life. Nationalism in the phase following the World War I was naturally broad enough to include all classes and draw the masses too.

MAHATMA GANDHI :—

Mahatma Gandhi was the popular hero of the new nationalism. Since his return to India in 1914 after a vigorous South African campaign, he interested himself in peasant and labour welfare and shone in public life as the champion of the 'under-dog'. He selected Sabarmati near Ahmedabad prison as the place of his residence and it was significant :

1. *"It seemed rather symbolical that Mr. Gandhi should live so near a prison—as if to emphasise the contrast between the old dispensation and the new : and to remind the new that it has not yet abolished the old."*⁴

Before he started his experiments in Indian politics, he was advised by his 'Guru', Gopal Krishna Gokhale, to make himself perfectly familiar with India. He probably did not need such an advice as he was India itself. He was India with all its strength and weakness, with all its might and meekness. He instinctively understood more about India than what it knew about itself. He was unimpressive in his appearance but he compelled reverence from all who went near him. There was something tremendously fearless and self-less, something intensely moral and earnest about him which made him the loved of all. The world had known much about him while he was in South Africa—probably as a Lao Tsü or St. Francis of Assisi reborn and offering moral resistance. It had to know him now as "one of the greatest souls who have shaken the world."⁵ "It is in the fitness of things", wrote Rabindranath

4. Alexander, H. G. : The Indian Ferment p. 213.

5. Ibid p. 216.

Tagore, "that Mahatma Gandhi, frail in body and devoid of all material resources, should call up the immense powers of the meek."⁶ W.E.S. Holland says :

*"There is no quicker way to understand the heart of India than to study Mr. Gandhi. In him is expressed as nearly as may be India's ideal—the type of character she worships. Probably no man in his life-time has ever commanded the affectionate reverence of so many millions of his fellow-men."*⁷

Dr. Macnicol tells us that Mahatma Gandhi's actions were not those of "an aimless fanatic". They were directed towards a single end—the creation of a new spirit of strength and self-respect in the country. He was not a portent. He was a symbol—a symbol of India's awakening :

*"In him we see the spirit of India reawakening, calling up ideals, long forgotten, from their graves. Such is this frail man's power. He is India risen from the dead and his voice stirs in hearts all through the land emotions that are ancient and profound."*⁸

"He did not descend from the top", writes Pandit Nehru ; "he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition". His real battle was against fear, "the dominant impulse in India under British rule"—"fear, pervasive, oppressing, strangling fear ; fear of the army, the police, the widespread secret service ; fear of the official class ; fear of laws meant to suppress and of prison ; fear of the landlord's agent ; fear of the money-lender ; fear of unemployment and starvation, which were always on the threshold". As a public worker and politician, he had no thought for adventurism which seldom leads anywhere.⁹ These extracts, we have cited, give us an explanation of the hold of the Mahatma on his country-men. We shall now examine the main political developments.

THE ROWLATT BILLS AND SATYAGRAHA :—

At the end of the war, the government of Lord Chelmsford

6. Cited in Holland, The Indian Outlook p. 66.

7. Ibid.

8. The Making of Modern India, pp. 19-21.

9. The Discovery of India p. 427.

spied dangers on all sides and was almost panick-struck. It suspected that the emissaries of Moscow and the agents of Kabul, with the gospel of insurrection on their lips, were moving about in the country, preaching sedition to the armed forces also. The accession of pro-Russian Amanullah as the Amir of Afghanistan in Feb., 1919 further alarmed the bureaucracy. The Amir, counting upon the possibility of a general Muslim uprising, took the false step of invading India in April following and was beaten back with disgrace. In the month of March, the Government hurried through the legislature Criminal Emergency Laws, popularly known as Rowlatt Bills, to continue in force for a period of three years. They were based on the recommendations of the Sedition Committee under the Presidentship of Justice Rowlatt of the King's High Court, appointed in 1918 to investigate revolutionary conspiracies in India in the past. They gave drastic powers of arrest and detention with summary trial to the magistracy and placed the liberties of the people at its mercy. They were never used even once during the three years of their life but they were the starting point of the first civil resistance movement under the direction of Mahatma Gandhi.

From his ashram at Sabarmati, Mahatmaji started his Satyagraha campaign in defiance of the Rowlatt Bills. He first implored the government to withdraw them, as they were passed in the teeth of universal opposition and betrayed want of trust in the people at a time when Responsible Government was contemplated. There was no response to his appeal, and on Feb., 28, he published the Satyagraha pledge to be considered binding on the nation. People were to sign and observe the pledge to "refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws" until they were withdrawn. They were "unjust, subversive of the principle of liberty and justice, and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals on which the safety of the community as a whole and the state itself is based". He undertook an extensive tour through the country to educate people in the principles and practice of Satyagraha. It was an act of self-discipline and purification for the nation which had acquired various evils owing to its contacts with Western civilization and materialism. Through it the nation could acquire soul-force to combat the brute force of Imperialism. Without it India could not carry on the pas'sive

resistance struggle. which Gokhale defined at the 24th Congress in connection with Gandhiji's struggles in South Africa :

*"What is the passive resistance struggle ? It is essentially defensive in its nature, and it fights with moral and spiritual weapons. A passive resister resists tyranny by undergoing suffering in his own person. He pits soul force against brute force ; he pits the divine in man against the brute in man ; he pits suffering against oppression, pits conscience against might, he pits faith against injustice ; right against wrong."*¹⁰

March 30th was proclaimed and observed as the Satyagraha Day, when people marched in processions, offered prayers and took the vow. It was a day of hartal, of complete suspension of all business. This was, however, the first experiment of people with soul-force in politics and they failed to grasp its meaning. The action of the police provoked them into open clash with the authorities at the capital and various other places, particularly in the Punjab. On April 10, at Amritsar, a mob outburst resulted in some deaths of Europeans, and Dr. Kichlu and Satyapal were arrested. Gandhiji was prevented from entering Delhi and the Punjab where considerable tension prevailed. His arrest at a station near Mathura to send him back provoked disturbances at Ahmedabad, Bombay, the centres of labour discontent. On April 18, Gandhiji suspended the Satyagraha movement, confessing it to be "a Himalayan miscalculation," as the Satyagrahis failed to conduct it "without the slightest violence." In a speech at Ahmedabad on the 14th April, 1919, he said :

*"I have said times without number that Satyagraha admits of no violence, no pillage, no incendiarism ; and still in the name of Satyagraha we burnt down buildings, forcibly captured weapons, extorted money, stopped trains, cut off telegraph wires, killed innocent people and plundered shops and private houses. If deeds such as these could save me from the prison house or the scaffold, I should not like to be saved."*¹¹

10. Annie Besant : How India Wrought for Freedom p. 499.

11. Mahatma Gandhi ; The Man and His Mission, Natesan publication, p. 55.

MARTIAL LAW IN THE PUNJAB:—

Under Sir Michael O' Dwyer, the Governor, and Brigadier Dyer, the Punjab became a veritable inferno. The authorities administered the martial law, the negation of all law, in a brute barbarous manner. At Jallianwallah Bagh in Amritsar, an innocent gathering of men, women and children was subjected to brutal military repression on April 13, 1919. Dyer felt like reducing the entire city to a heap of ashes. The firing was a deliberate act of massacre planned by the military authorities under the inspiration of a policy of terror. The monstrous crawling order which followed, inflicted gross indignities on the people, who were made to crawl on their bellies in the lane, where Europeans had been victimised by mob fury. The other methods, reckless floggings and whippings, arrests and confiscations and all sorts of fancy punishments were used to terrorise and humiliate the population. General Dyer also issued orders requiring Indians to alight from the conveyances and to salaam European officers. Restrictions on travelling were imposed on the entire province for "decreased respect towards Europeans." The students at schools and colleges were indiscriminately flogged for their failure to bow before the white Sahibs.¹²

The Disorders Inquiry Committee under the Chairmanship of Lord Hunter, Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, appointed to report on the Punjab wrongs, could not cover up the misdeeds of the military. It admits that at Jallianwallah Bagh, the number of rounds fired were 1650, "and the extent of the casualties, the dead being estimated at 379 and the wounded at three times that number."¹³ The Indian members in their separate report speak of General Dyer's action as inhuman and un-British and as having caused great disservice to British rule in India. They attribute his conduct to the fixed idea that India must be ruled by force. His action in continuing the firing on the people after they had begun to disperse has been considered as "indefensible." And further,

"Here too we must express our regret that no action was taken either by the civil or the military authorities to remove the dead or give aid to the wounded."¹⁴

12. Disorders Inquiry Committee 1919-20 Report, pp 205-208.

13. Ibid p. XX.

14. Ibid pp. XXI-XXII.

The majority of the four European members tried to explain away the atrocities of General Dyer as a "grave error" of judgment, "as a mistaken conception of his duty." They were of opinion that "it was his intention to create a moral effect throughout the Punjab", as the ghost of rebellion was haunting his disordered imagination. They mostly emphasised the evils of Satyagraha—"The actual collisions between the police and mobs are found to be the by-products of the Satyagraha movement."¹⁵ When the Punjab was opened for free traffic the country learnt of its tragedies with horror.

The Report of Lord Hunter's Committee published on 28th May, 1920 offended Indian Nationalism. Montagu, the Secretary of State condemned the savagery of the Brigadier as inconsistent with the principles of British Government but lavished praise on the Governor's sagacity and the Viceroy's masterly inactivity. The debates in the Parliament and Lord Finlay's motion in the House of Lords condoning General Dyer shocked all classes in this country. The Government relieved the superior officers of their service in India and took no further action. The Anglo-Indian Press greeted General Dyer as the saviour of British rule and even appealed for funds for raising a memorial in his honour. The Indian Press met its challenge by the cry—"Chelmsford must go", and was furious. The atmosphere was tense, charged with mistrust on both sides, and the nation was in a mood of defiance and retaliation. The non-cooperation movement of Mahatma Gandhi provided safe outlet to national fury aroused by the Punjab wrongs and injury to the Muslim religious susceptibilities.

THE KHILAFAT AGITATION :—

A few months after the Jallianwallah episode came the news of the Treaty of Sevres, which dismembered the Ottoman Empire and infuriated Indian Muslims to high-fever heat. The Khilafat was humiliated and the holy lands were under the occupation of the infidels. The Jazirat-ul-Arab, the sacred home of Islam, comprising the area bounded by the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Tigris and the Euphrates, which should be under the Khalifa, was split up. A large part

15. Ibid p. XX.

16. Ibid p. 15.

of it was placed under non-Muslim powers. To help the Khalifa was a religious duty enjoined on every member of the faith. This was the origin of the Khilafat agitation and its aim was the restoration of the temporal and spiritual jurisdiction of the Sultan, the Caliph of Islam. The Muslim League, which had come close to the Congress during the war, now passed completely under nationalist influences. The religious divines of Islam, the Ulema, were fiery advocates of the Khilafat, and their voice was very powerful at the League Session of 1918, held at Delhi under the Presidentship of Dr. M. A. Ansari. At this Session the League also demanded the application of the principles of Self-Government to India. Under the guidance of Maulana Mohammad-ul-Hasan, who was interned at Malta for his anti-British activities during the war and who returned to India at the end of it, the Ulema entered politics and organised Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind. This body used its full influence in moulding Muslim political opinion on national lines.

The Khilafat agitation was a happy beginning for a joint Hindu-Muslim front in an active trial of strength with the bureaucracy. It provided "such an opportunity", to quote Mahatma Gandhi, "of uniting Hindus and Muhammedans as would not arise in a hundred years."¹⁷ The Mahatma decided to make the Khilafat grievance an all-India grievance, and a substantial section of nationalists favoured such a move. It was advertised as a super-brilliant feat solving at a stroke the problem of India's relationship with the Muslim neighbours. Here are the comments of Rajagopalachariar, who wrote in 1921 :

"The Khilafat has solved the problem of distrust of Asiatic neighbours out of our future. The Indian struggle for the freedom of Islam has brought about a more lasting entente and a more binding treaty between the people of India and the people of the Mussalman States around it than all the ententes and treaties among the Governments of Europe. No wars of aggression are possible where the common people on the two sides have become grateful friends. The faith of the Mussulman is a better sanction than the seal of the European

17. Cited in Coupland : The Indian Problem Part I p. 73.

*diplomats and plenipotentiaries. Not only has this great friendship between India and the Mussalman states around it removed for all times the fear of Mussalman aggression from outside, but it has erected round India, a solid wall of defence against all aggression from beyond, against all greed from Europe, Russia or else where..... The Indian support of the, Khilafat has as if by a magic wand converted what was once the Pan-Islamic terror for Europe into a solid wall of friendship and defence for India."*¹⁸

In November 1919, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Asaf Ali and other Muslim leaders convened a conference of the prominent leaders of the two communities at Delhi. Here Mahatma Gandhi supported the cause of the Khilafat and the Muslims promised to abide by his passive resistance. Swami Shraddhanandji, the veteran Arya Samajist, also extended his hearty support to the proceedings of the conference. It called upon both Hindus and Muslims to take the Swadeshi vow and to non-cooperate with the Government in the event of its betrayal on the Khilafat issue. Maulana Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali could not attend this conference as they were still interned for their propaganda against the government during the war. Soon after they were released and they joined the Congress. Owing to their passion for struggle the national movement acquired revolutionary tone and radical complexion. They assumed the leadership of the Khilafat movement. In March 1920, Muhammad Ali also proceeded to Europe on a Khilafat deputation to secure more favourable terms for Turkey from the Allies but returned disappointed. Anti-British feeling was now very strong among the Muslims and the pious among them even thought of leaving this country, altogether. There developed the movement of Hijrat (flight), about which Maulvi Hasrat Mohani, the President of the League Session of 1921 at Ahmedabad, spoke as follows :—

"In the meantime the Muslims embarked upon a plan of hijrat to Afghanistan as they felt they could not stay in India under the British, after the peace that England made with Turkey. The movement was started in Sind and spread to the North-Western Frontier. A ghastly

*collision took place between the emigrants and the military at Kacha Garhi which exasperated the people and in the month of August (1920) it was estimated that 18000 people were on their way to Afghanistan. But very soon the Afghan authorities forbade the admission of Muhajerin and a set-back was given to the idea after a considerable loss of life and suffering."*¹⁹

Hence we find that in 1920 the political and the Khilafat movements were developing side by side uniting in Gandhiji's non-violent non-cooperation.

TUSSLE IN THE CONGRESS :—

Gandhiji's doctrines of Satyagraha and cult of passive resistance were not easily accepted by the Congress which was familiar with constitutional agitation only. The Liberals were frankly hostile to them. They argued that non-cooperation had its roots, not only in intense patriotism but hatred of the foreign rule, and that hatred would be the inspiring impulse of the non-cooperating masses. Surendranath writes that non-cooperation could not be prescribed as a national programme, "for the masses were non-cooperating among themselves by carrying on a programme of violence and hatred."²⁰ Sir Narayan Chandavarkar argued the futility of methods leading to anarchy. Sir Sankran Nair dismissed Gandhiji's teachings on soul-force as the outpourings of a fantastic visionary. He was not impressed by his role as a politician and the practice of Willo-the-wisp politics.²¹ The aspirants after Councils inside the Congress were hesitant to shun the honours of the legislatures and commit political hara-kiri. Nationalists like Tilak thought that saintliness was no match to Imperialism. He was in favour of a programme of constitutional cooperation or constitutional opposition whichever was expedient. His death on 1st August, 1920, however, left the field to Gandhiji without formidable opposition. Annie Besant, who was a powerful personality, now appeared reactionary as she did not agree even with the theory of non-cooperation. She regarded it "as the greatest set-back to India's freedom", "an insane proposition, "a declaration of war against society and civilized life."²²

19. Pattabhi : History of the Congress Vol. I p. 199.

20. A Nation in Making, p. 302.

21. See Nair, S : Gandhi and Anarchy.

22. Annie Besant, the Builder of India . 109-126.

Gandhiji forged non-cooperation ahead only after mobilising country-wide support. At the Amritsar Congress Session of Dec. 1919, he even temporised, moved a resolution of thanks to Montagu for the Royal Proclamation of Amnesty, and condemned mob-fury in the Punjab. The Congress also passed a resolution which did not reject the Reforms entirely and welcomed the King's gesture of goodwill. The League, the Khilafat organisation, and the Jamiat-ul-Ulema held their sessions simultaneously with the Congress and deliberated over the Jallianwallah massacre. They had still some hope from the deputation proposed to leave shortly for Europe. But the leniency of the British Government towards the Punjab wrong-doers and the indignation of the Muslim Community at the failure of Muhammad Ali's deputation forced the Congress out from its position of benevolent neutrality at Amritsar. The Special Session of the Congress at Calcutta in September 1920 under Lajpat Rai was a complete change of front in politics. The Congress here swallowed Mahatma's novel revolutionary proposal of non-cooperation. In moving his resolution, he made a memorable speech. The British Government was the Satan with whom no cooperation was possible. Without Swaraj repetition of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs could not be prevented. He, therefore, asked the Congress to adopt a policy of "progressive non-violent non-cooperation" with the government. But he pointed out that the Congress "must enforce a clear repentance, before accepting a single gift, from those blood-stained hands." His attitude towards the Reforms changed. "The issue is, whether Swaraj has to be gained through the new Councils or without the Councils," said he. "Knowing the British Government to be utterly unrepentant," he observed, "how can we believe that the new Councils will lead to Swaraj?" He defined Swaraj as follows:

"It means a state, such that we can maintain our separate existence without the presence of the English. If it is to be a partnership, it must be a partnership at will."^{23(a)}

His resolution was opposed by Madan Mohan Malaviya, Bepin Chandra, C. R. Das, Mrs. Besant, M. A. Jinnah. Lalaji was wavering. He was personally in favour of the principle of Non-Cooperation, but he doubted the wisdom of certain items

in Gandhiji's programme such as the withdrawal of boys from schools and leaving of practice by the lawyers. Pandit Motilal Nehru, the leading advocate of Allahabad and the leader of the U.P., supported the Mahatma wholeheartedly. Gandhiji carried his proposal—2728 votes were cast for him and 1835 against him. The nationalists, whose leadership was now in the hands of C.R. Das, a brilliant barrister of the Calcutta High Court, complained that the Khilafatists had packed the house and manoeuvred a majority. After the Calcutta Session, Gandhiji had a hurricane tour popularising non-cooperation throughout the country. He energised the dull despair of the masses, filled them with new hopes, dispelled their fears and gave them a technique of struggle. He asked Hindus and Muslims "to offer a united front to the whole of the Christian powers of Europe and tell them that weak as India is, India has still got the capacity of preserving her self-respect, she still knows how to die for her religion and for her self-respect". He condemned electioneering as a trap and the ways of the government as "immoral, unjust, debasing and untruthful." He asked people to offer no cooperation in thought or deed to the government and accept no gifts or rewards from it :

"There is a Greek proverb which used to say "Beware of the Greeks but especially beware of them when they bring gifts to you.—Do not accept gifts."23(b)

There was remarkable fraternisation between the two communities. At the occasions of religious festivals, the Muslims at Delhi practically gave up cow-killing—even on the Bakr-Id day. There were cries of Bande-mataram and Allah-ho-Akbar everywhere and a Swami Shraddhanand would often make a harangue to the Muslim audience from the pulpit of the Jumma mosque.

The regular Nagpur Session of 1920, at which 20,000 delegates were present, was a triumph for Mahatma Gandhi. It confirmed the previous resolution on non-cooperation. The nationalists under C. R. Das fell into line with him, while Bepin Chandra and Baptista left the Congress and joined the Liberals. At this session, Gandhiji also produced the new Congress constitution in which Swaraj was declared as the goal "within the British Empire, if possible, and without if necessary." The means were changed from "constitutional" to "by all peaceful and legitimate

23 (b). See Gandhiji's Speeches : Swaraj and Non-Cooperation.

means." His draft was a middle course satisfying both the moderates like Malaviya and Jinnah and the youthful extremists who began to swamp the Congress pandals. The Congress also decided to raise a subscription of about a crore of rupees to commemorate Tilak and this helped it in raising a Corps of Volunteers. There was generous response of the public to the Congress appeal. On November 4, 1920, Motilalji, the Secretary of All-India Congress Committee announced that the collections to the Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund were almost complete. The provinces of Gujerat and Bombay contributed Rs. 15,00,000 and 37,50,000 respectively.

The Nagpur Session of 1920 marks an important stage in the development of national movement. With the baptism of non-cooperation the old Congress was virtually dead. The Congress was now, as Dr. Zacharias says, "a new well disciplined and well-funded organisation and can be said to have definitely settled down to a policy of extremism, which, however, Mr. Gandhi's innate conservatism and love of justice have never permitted to go beyond a perfectly legitimate national intransigence."²⁴

PROGRESS OF THE MOVEMENT :—

Before Gandhiji started the non cooperation movement, he requested the Viceroy in his letter of Aug. 1, 1920, "to summon a conference of recognised leaders of the people, and in consultation with them, to find a way that will gladden Mussalmans and do reparation to the unhappy Punjab." But the adversary did not show a change of heart and the Mahatma preached non-cooperation. His resolution, passed at the special Congress Session at Calcutta, emphasised the following features of the movement in the initial stage :

- (i) Surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in local bodies :
- (ii) Refusal to attend Government levees, durbars, and official and semi-official functions held by government officials or in their honour :
- (iii) Gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges, owned, aided, controlled by Government and establishment of national schools and colleges in the various provinces :

- (iv) Gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and litigants and establishment of private arbitration courts for the settlement of disputes with the aid of lawyers :
- (v) Refusal on the part of military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia :
- (vi) Withdrawal by candidates of their candidature for election to the Reformed Councils and refusal on the part of voters to vote for any candidate offering himself for election :
- (vii) Adoption of Swadeshi in piece-goods on a vast scale and revival of hand-spinning in every home and hand-weaving on the part of weavers who had abandoned the calling.

After the Nagpur Session, Gandhiji accompanied by the Ali Brothers went from place to place popularising the movement. They would often preach fire but the Mahatma shrank at the very mention of violence. At the idea of people drawing the sword, he thought of retiring to the jungles of Hindustan. He, of course, did not want people to crawl on their bellies and submit to wrongs. But what he advocated was constitutional non-cooperation as it was perfectly legal for a man to serve his conscience and not his master. To start with, he emphasised the four-fold programme of the boycott of schools, foreign cloth, Councils and Government. In February, 1921, the Congress successfully organised the boycott of the Duke of Connaught, who came to inaugurate the Councils and was greeted by hartals. In April, Lord Reading took charge as the Governor-General and in May, Gandhiji had an interview with him arranged by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. Its immediate result was an apology from the Ali brothers regretting their occasional lapses into provocative language, and promising to restrain from incitement to violence either in speech or in writing. In July 1921, Gandhiji passionately advocated the boycott of foreign cloth, and the Khilafat Conference under Muhammad Ali declared it 'haram' (religious offence) for Muslims to serve the British Government. Both the brothers were arrested and sentenced to two years imprisonment. Gandhiji's reply was the call

to the peasantry for the non-payment of taxes. The Congress also preached the boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales in the cold winter of 1921—22. The day of his landing at Bombay—17th. November, 1921, was the occasion of a bloody riot. Gandhiji condemned it—that what he had himself seen at Bombay stank in his nostrils and undertook to fast till there was complete peace. The Government used all its powers to suppress the movement. The Congress Corps of Volunteers was declared an unlawful body, but people enlisted themselves in large numbers. They went to jail in thousands and eminent leaders like C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru were put in prison. But wherever His Royal Highness went, hartals followed him and the cities wore a deserted appearance. The Prince saw only the spectacle of mass arrests. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the then Law-Member, persuaded the Viceroy to agree to a conference of leaders with the representatives of the government. Gandhiji did not agree to it under threats and intimidation by the Viceroy.

There is no doubt that throughout 1921 the movement was gradually acquiring tempo and vigour. The boycott of the courts appeared quite successful and Seth Jamna Lal Bajaj, Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Congress at Nagpur, donated a lac of rupees for the maintenance of non-cooperating lawyers. The boycott of cloth and liquor was also encouraging, and in Bihar the government even conducted a campaign for popularising the use of liquor and intoxicants to increase the revenue. Students withdrew from state-controlled institutions and national institutions were started for literary and technical education in all provinces. The Ashrams serving as centres of spinning and weaving grew up in the rural areas. The slogan of the Mahatma—Swaraj within a year, imparted strength to the movement. In Bengal, the Assam-Bengal Railway strike paralysed rail and steamer traffic in East Bengal and Assam. The no-tax campaign in the Midnapore district was a success. In 1921, it appeared as if "Mahatma Gandhi was riding on the crest of a wave and had no obstacles to encounter."²⁵ With the exception of the Liberals, who were running the Reforms, the entire country was on his side. The advocates of armed insurrection, too, had accepted his lead.

At the Ahmedabad Congress of Dec. 1921, Gandhiji denounced violence but resolved to meet the repression of the authorities by a policy of individual and mass civil disobedience. He exhorted everyone to join the National Corps and offer civil resistance. It was intended to be a passive defiance of laws which would make the walls of terror tremble and come down with a crash. It appeared as if he was now determined to lead a movement of civil disobedience of a very fierce type. "We must draw the gun-powder on our heads and that too at the earliest possible opportunity,"²⁶ said he. The Congress appointed him the dictator to lead the movement. In his letter of Feb. 1, 1922 to the Viceroy, he made a strong protest against "Official lawlessness and barbarism" and issued an ultimatum to launch civil disobedience movement in case there was not a complete change of heart within seven days.²⁷ Before the expiry of the period, on Feb. 4th a mob of 3000 men led by the Congress volunteers massacred twenty-two police-men at Chauri Chaura—a small town in the U.P. The peasantry was eager to wreak its vengeance on the agents of the government. It was shocking to the Mahatma as soul-force was getting contaminated by brute force. He advised the Congress Working Committee to suspend the movement and concentrate on the constructive programme of Khaddar manufacture. Most of the leaders were behind the bars, and the British Government, after securing the confession of failure from the dictator of the Congress, tried him for promoting disaffection. He was sentenced to six years imprisonment and lodged in Yarbada Jail. At the commencement of the great trial in March 1922, "the entire court rose in an act of spontaneous homage when Mahatma Gandhi entered—a frail, serene, indomitable figure in a coarse and scanty loin cloth." Mrs. Sarojini Naidu wrote about the trial as the "most epic event of modern times" and that :

*"I realized now that the lowly Jesus of Nazareth cradled in a manger furnished the only true parallel in history to this invincible apostle of Indian liberty who loved humanity with surpassing compassion, and.....approached the poor with the mind of the poor."*²⁸

26. Ghosh, P. C. : From Nagpur to Lahore.

27. Mahatma Gandhi, The Man and his Mission pp. 82-85.

28. Ibid pp. 91-92.

THE SUSPENSION OF THE MOVEMENT :—

The suspension of the movement produced an outcry in the Congress rank and file. C. R. Das, Motilal and Lajpat Rai reproached Gandhiji from behind the prison. Dr. Moonje even moved a vote of censure on him at a regular meeting of the A. I. C. C. It is instructive to study the comments of eminent nationalists of the Gandhian period on the suspension of the movement which looked like a dramatic anti-climax or sudden volte-face of the Mahatma. C. R. Das, with whom Subhas Bose was sharing prison-life at Alipore, was of opinion that "the Mahatma opens a campaign in a brilliant fashion, he works it up with unerring skill, he moves from success to success till he reaches the zenith of his campaign—but after that he loses his nerve and begins to falter."²⁹ Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru writes :

*"We were angry when we learnt of this stoppage of our struggle at a time when we seemed to be consolidating our position and advancing on all fronts."*³⁰

He, however, admits that the suspension of the movement was not due to Chauri Chaura alone, which was "only the last straw." "At that time our movement," he writes, "inspite of its apparent power and the widespread enthusiasm, was going to pieces." There was deterioration in organisation and discipline and the masses had not learnt to conduct the struggle without the leaders who were in jails. The principles and objectives of struggle were not defined, and a "vague Swaraj with no clear ideology behind it and a particular technique of non-violent struggle," could not sustain popular enthusiasm. The British policy of frightful repression and coercion was leading to demoralisation and "if the movement had continued there would have been growing sporadic violence in many places." Pandit Nehru observes further :

*"This would have been crushed by Government in a bloody manner and a reign of terror established which would have thoroughly demoralised the people."*³¹

Subhas Bose is of different opinion—

"The Dictator's decree was obeyed at the time, but there was a

29. Bose, S. C. : The Indian Struggle p. 103.

30. Autobiography p. 81.

31. Ibid pp 85-86.

regular revolt in the Congress camp.....To sound the order of retreat just when public enthusiasm was reaching the boiling point was nothing short of a national calamity."³²

He recounts the following shortcomings of the movement—

1. "In the first place, too much power and responsibility was handed over to one man."
2. "Secondly, the promise of Swaraj within one year was not only unwise but childish. It made the Congress appear so foolish before all reasonable men."
3. "Thirdly, the introduction of the Khilafat question into Indian politics was unfortunate."³³

It is a weakness of all mass movements that they first produce a super-man and then follow his lead blindly. Political history also tells us that, very often, sensational and even silly slogans are more effective in catching the popular imagination and working up mass enthusiasm than rational directives of policy. So far as the Khilafat issue is concerned, it was certainly a source of strength to Indian nationalism in the period following the war. The League completely merged into the Congress and it is recorded that it did not meet as a separate body between 1919 and 1924. The Khilafat agitation had also some semblance of validity as the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, in his statement on Jan. 5, 1918, had promised that Great Britain had no intention of depriving the Turks of the rich lands of Asia Minor and Thrace which were predominantly Turkish. It was a weakness of Hindu politics that it could not meet the anticipations of the Muslim mind which was even prepared to go through fire and water.

The liberals and moderate nationalists like Malaviya inside the Congress, who kept away from the movement, thought that Gandhij's refusal to agree to the government's offer of goodwill was a political blunder. Lord Reading was eager to create smooth atmosphere for the reception of the Prince of Wales who came to India in December, 1921. He wanted the Congress to call off the movement and not to boycott the Prince's visit. He promised to withdraw the government notifications against the Congress and release those who were detained under them.

32. The Indian struggle p. 108.

33. Ibid pp 104-105.

He held out the hope that he would summon a Round Table Conference of the representatives of the Congress and the Government to settle the future constitution of India. Much may not have come out of this conference. There is, however, no doubt that it would have saved the face of the Congress which was hardly contemplating agitation for Swaraj to be carried on to its logical end.

The effectiveness of the movement was considerably marred by the atrocities of the Moplahs on the Hindus in British Malabar towards the close of 1921 and the Hindu-Muslim front began to crack in the later period. With violence getting into national struggle, there was every possibility of class and communal conflicts breaking out and it was considered expedient to call off the movement in time. Nevertheless, the movement was quite a success in the sense that it was the first call to the masses to get into the field of struggle and their response was not disappointing. The meetings and conferences in connection with the movement were a substantial political education to the common-folk. Apart from its moral and ethical side, non-violence was sound practical politics and Gandhiji also wrote to the Viceroy in his letter of August, 1920 :

*"In European countries condonation of such grievous wrong as the Khilafat and the Punjab would have resulted in a bloody revolution by the people. Half of India is too weak to offer violent resistance and the other half is unwilling to do so, I have, therefore ventured to suggest the remedy of non-cooperation."*³⁴

Pandit Nehru is, however, inclined to believe that the sudden suspension of civil resistance, "bottling up of a great movement", contributed to tragic development of Hindu-Muslim tension. The years which followed were affected by serious riots and he writes :

*"The drift to sporadic and futile violence in the political struggle was stopped, but the suppressed violence had to find a way out, and in the following years, this perhaps aggravated the communal trouble. The communalists of various denominations, mostly political reactionaries, had been forced to lie low because of the overwhelming mass support for the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement. They emerged now from their retirement."*³⁵

34. Mahatma Gandhi, The Man and His Mission p. 66.

35. Autobiography p. 86.

CHAPTER X

THE SWARAJIST POLITICS (1922-28).

Repression and Reaction—Rise of the Swarajist Party—Aims and Methods of Swarajists—Their Work in Legislatures—Demoralisation of the Council Front.

REPRESSION AND REACTION :—

During 1920-21, when the non-cooperation movement was in progress, Englishmen were rather reluctant to accept service in India. At the I.C.S. examination of 1921, the required number of them was not available for recruitment. The members of the Liberal Federation, who took part in the elections under the new Act in November 1920 and were working it, too failed to retain their full interest in the job. They had a promising start and it was hoped that they would succeed in establishing themselves as the dominant political organisation in the country after the Congress technique of struggle had apparently miscarried. But they could not secure friendly cooperation from the government and were in a state of mental torment. In the European circles, it became a fashion to talk about India as the lost dominion. The Mahatma came to be regarded as a vain, dangerous sham eager for popular applause, and whose teachings resulted in "a series of anarchic riots". The Britishers were really perturbed at the fact that among the Hindus "the worship of the 'Mother' was giving place to the worship of Gandhi."¹

After the suspension of the movement the authorities were all the more bent on coercion. Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister in a coalition cabinet, forced Mr. Montagu to submit his resignation in March 1922. His place as Secretary of State was taken up by Lord Peel, a member of the Conservative party. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Law-Member of the Government of India, and a Liberal, was shrewd enough to foresee the new

1. Carhill, A : The Lost Dominion, p. 271, 276.

trend in British policy, and he resigned in the following month. In August, the Prime Minister delivered his famous "Steel-frame" speech, praising the work and efficiency of the I.C.S. cadre. The Reforms, he said, were in the nature of an experiment—"a great and important experiment but still an experiment." He admitted that Indians were good parliamentarians but :

*"What I want specially to say is this, that whatever their success as Parliamentarians or as Administrators, I can see no period when they can dispense with the guidance and assistance of the small nucleus of the British Civil Service. They are the steel-frame of the whole structure. I do not care what you build on it, if you take the steel-frame out, the whole structure will collapse"*²

What were the implications of this statement? It was a plain repudiation of the principle of self-government as the goal of British policy towards India. It was an incitement to the bureaucracy, a direct encouragement to a policy of repression. The British government also strengthened its position in another direction. During his visit to India, the Prince of Wales was impressed with the servility of the Indian States and political backwardness of their subjects. He did not certainly like the deafening noise of politics in British India. His government now began patting the Princely order on the back to bring it close to the Crown in an alliance against Indian nationalism. Lord Winterton, the Under-Secretary-of-State paid a visit to India and tutored the Viceroy and the Governors of the provinces to follow the new policy. The Government also passed the Indian States (Protection against Disaffection) Bill to prevent the growth of sedition in Indian India. It was rejected by the Legislative Assembly but certified as 'urgent' by the Viceroy in Sept. 1922. After the departure of Lord Winterton, writes Subhas Babu, "representatives of the Government of India began to sing praises of the Princes whenever a suitable opportunity presented itself."³

Let us now turn to the nationalist front. The generalissimo of the Congress was behind the bars and there was no definite political programme before the country. The artificial Hindu-

2. Kerala Putra : The Working of Dyarchy in India p. 38.

3. The Indian Struggle, p. 112.

Muslim alliance bolstered up by Khilafat agitation was fast tottering. In March 1924, Kemal Pasha liberated Turkey and secularised the state, which now laid no claims on the holy places of Arabia. He abolished the Caliphate and announced to the world that agitation in support of it was a farce. The interests of the Muslims of other countries were no concern of the new Turkish state. Muslim Communalism came into full play and the common Muslim was led away by Anglo-Indian propaganda that he was tricked into a struggle for Hindu Swaraj. At the annual session of the Muslim League at Aligarh in Dec. 1925, even Muhammad Ali, the hero of the Khilafat days, repudiated his allegiance to Gandhiji. Mr. Jinnah, the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity and Sir Abdur Rahim, too, adopted the separatist attitude. The Hindu-Muslim riots throughout 1923-27, the like of which India had not seen before, the Shuddhi movement of Swami Shraddhanand converted Hindu-Muslim unity into disunity. The constructive programme of the Congress High Command—campaign against illiteracy, intemperance and untouchability in the rural areas, popularising of the spinning wheel, enrolment of the Congress volunteers etc.—had the merit of bringing the Congress workers in touch with the masses. It was, however, essentially a socio-economic programme and could not appeal to the intellectuals who believed in some sort of political action. They looked on politics from the plane of reality and were eager to rescue themselves from the malaise of demoralisation. There was naturally a review and orientation in Congress policies and the wave of direct action subsided into parliamentarism and even cooperation with the government.

• THE SWARAJ PARTY :—

In 1919-20, it was with difficulty that the Nationalists were converted to the Gandhi cult. They were eager to take advantage of their presence in the Councils, teach a lesson to their moderate brethren who had parted company, and if possible, remove the hurdles on the road to full responsible government. Their leader, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, had strong doubts regarding the self-denying ordinances, which 'non-cooperation' prescribed to the people. In his Manifesto before his death, he emphatically declared that the Montagu Reforms were "inade-

quate, unsatisfactory and disappointing" and outlined the programme of his party as follows :

*"This party (Congress Democratic Party) proposes to work the Montagu Reforms Act for all it is worth and for accelerating the grant of full Responsible Government, and, for this purpose, it will without hesitation offer cooperation or resort to constitutional opposition, whichever may be expedient and best calculated to give effect to the popular will,"*⁴

Before the Nagpur Congress of 1920, some leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lajpat Rai, C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Bipin Chandra Pal also met in a secret conference at Banaras to devise a machinery to checkmate Mahatmaji's influence. They could not oust him and at the Nagpur Congress, C. R. Das and Motilal, the two rising stars accepted the call of the Mahatma. After the suspension of the movement, there was revival of old politics in a different complexion. The ideal of constitutional opposition inspired Chitta Ranjan Das, the Bengali leader, whose rise in politics and at the bar was quite phenomenal. Subhas Chandra Bose, who regarded him as his political 'guru', writes that :

*"With the reckless abandon of a Vaishnava devotee, he had plunged into the political movement with heart and soul and he had given not only himself but his all in the fight for Swaraj."*⁵

He began to chalk out his plans for the foundation of the Swaraj Party while he was in the Alipore central jail. In May 1922, Mrs. C. R. Das, who presided over the Bengal Provincial Conference of Congress workers held at Chittagong, gave expression to the sentiments of her husband. She dwelt on the need of a new approach, a change in tactics and suggested that the policy of applying non-cooperation within the legislatures was worth a trial. Soon after his release in July, C. R. Das expressed his intention of going into the Councils and canvassed support for his move. After a stout resistance he hoped to capture every fort of the bureaucracy. His programme caused widespread alarm in some circles of the bureaucracy. "This sabotage is even more difficult to deal with than open rebellion," wrote

4. Pattabhi : History of the Congress, Vol. I p. 194.

5. The Indian Struggle, p. 158.

Sir Michael O' Dwyer in his book "India As I Knew it."⁶ The sabotage had a fascinating appeal to the intelligent sections in the Congress. The Civil Disobedience Committee of the Congress under the Chairmanship of Hakim Ajmal Khan also toured throughout the country and admitted the failure of the movement. Its three members, Dr. M. A. Ansari, C. Rajagopalachari, and S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar were not in favour of a change of the Congress programme in respect of the boycott of the Councils. But Hakim Ajmal Khan, Motilal Nehru and Vithalbhai Patel made the following recommendations :

1. That the country was not prepared to embark upon general mass civil disobedience.
2. That non-cooperators should contest the elections on the issue of the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs and immediate Swaraj.
8. That, if they were returned in majority, they should oppose every measure of the Government and only move resolutions for the redress of the aforesaid wrongs and immediate attainment of Swaraj. If they were in a minority, they were to take no part in the proceedings.

It may be emphasised here that this policy of constitutional opposition was largely dictated by the hostility of the government to even moderate aspirations of Indian nationalism. The liberal politicians had demanded a re-examination and review of the constitution at an earlier date than 1929, the year when a Statutory Commission was to report on the working of the Government of India Act, 1919. In his despatch of 2nd November, 1922, Lord Peel, the Secretary of State, turned down their demand and pointed out that the merits of the Act could not be tested in the short period during which it had been working. The Congress patriots congratulated Lord Peel "for driving one more nail into the coffin of Moderatism" and ridiculed the futility of political mendicancy. They said :

*"It is a good kick to those who lick the boots of the Government,.....Those who betray their country and strengthen the strangle-hold of the stranger-within-the gate deserve no consideration."*⁷

6. See Ranga Iyer, C. S. : India in the Crucible, p. 169.

7. Ibid, p. 45.

There was a clean split in the Congress. The No-Changers or Gandhites were drawing their inspiration from the incarceration of the Mahatma, and the Swarajists under C.R. Das and Motilal pleaded for Council-entry. The meeting of the A. I. C. C. at Calcutta in November, 1922, says Dr. Patabhi, was a tournament between these two sections.⁸ The problem of Council-entry was debated passionately. C. R. Das was supported by Motilalji but his proposal was rejected by 66% of the delegates. The hero of the occasion was the Madras leader, Rajagopalachari, who led the anti-Council-entry party. The Mohurrum riots of 1922 further encouraged the drift towards parliamentarism. The Gaya annual session of the Congress in 1922 under the Presidentship of C. R. Das discussed the issue of Council-entry in an excited spirit. Intellectuals like Vitthalbhai, Srinivasa Iyengar, the leader of the Madras bar, supported C. R. Das. The Khilafatists had also published a Fatwa declaring Council entry as mamnoon, not haram. The President, however, failed to carry the Congress with him, resigned from Presidentship, and intimated his plans to organise the Swaraj Party. The victory of the Gandhites at Gaya was also not lasting. The Hindu-Muslim riots of 1923 further darkened the political atmosphere, and it was plain that Civil Disobedience could not be resumed as a national programme. The special Congress Session held at Delhi in Sept. 1923, under the Chairmanship of Maulana Abdul Kalam approved of the revolt at Gaya and set the Congressites free to contest the forthcoming elections in November, 1923. At this session, writes P. C. Ghosh, Maulana Muhammad Ali "misled the delegates in the name of so-called 'telepathic message' from Gandhiji", and

*"Many fair-weather politicians who left the Congress when non-cooperation movement was inaugurated, now joined it and appeared in limelight again only to disappear after Lahore."*⁹

The annual session of the Congress in Dec., 1923 at Cocanada under Muhammad Ali blessed Council-entry by maintaining that non-cooperation could be effected from inside the councils also. The year 1924, therefore, divided the energies of the Congress

8. History of the Congress, Vol. I. p. 249.

9. From Nagpur to Lahore, p. vii.

on two fronts—the Council front and the Constructive front. The government made a gesture of conciliation in releasing Gandhiji in Feb, 1924, who was taken ill with appendicitis in prison and operated upon. The Swarajists had swept the polls at the 1923 elections in some provinces and it was not possible for him to bring the Congress back on the track of Civil Disobedience. Moreover, the defeat of the Conservative Government, which came into power after the elections of Oct., 1922, on the question of free-trade and the formation of Labour Cabinet under Mac Donald in January 1924 heightened the hopes of Indian politicians.

As the President of the Belgaun Congress of Dec., 1924, Gandhiji reconciled his followers with the Swarajists. He emphasised how the Congress had developed strength from within and that the boycott of violence was the most successful of all boycotts under its flag. He stressed the need of the continuance of the boycott of foreign goods, particularly those from Lancashire. Lancashire trade, he said, was an immoral traffic, sustaining itself on the ruin of India's millions. Hand-spinning and hand-weaving were necessary to carry out the boycott effectively. Towards the Swarajists, he said, he had no ill-thought and was ready to cling to them as a child clings to the mother. The Swarajists agreed to his spinning programme and he agreed to their work in the Councils. The spinning wheel, the Hindu-Muslim unity, the removal of untouchability were prescribed to Congress-men as the chief means for the attainment of Swaraj.

AIMS AND METHODS OF SWARAJISTS :—

The creed of the Swarajists was inspired by distrust of Civil Disobedience and ethical principles of the Gandhian ideology of struggle. In this context, P. C. Ray, the biographer of C. R. Das observes :

"If a successful revolution was unthinkable, if physical resistance did not enter into practical politics, if the voluntary abandonment or withdrawal of the British was moonshine, if a consistent life of detachment and renunciation could not get us a place in the Sun, then the only possible way in which India could be put on the road to Swaraj was by pursuing a policy of consistent and persistent obstruction of all measures initiated by

*the existing bureaucracy and thereby forcing the pace of the Reforms."*¹⁰

The members of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee, who pleaded for Council-entry to "smash the Councils" and "wreck the Reforms", also wrote :

*"Times have now changed. Circumstances have altered. The period of the struggle is indefinitely prolonged..... Theories and dogmas are all very well in their own way, but they will not carry you far if you ride them to death. Knock these Councils on the head and you will accomplish what millions spent in foreign propaganda cannot achieve. Wreck the reforms and you will smash at one blow the huge super-structure of world-wide deception which has cost millions to build up."*¹¹

In a speech in the Bengal Legislative Council in 1925, C. R. Das defined the aim of the Swaraj Party as follows :

*"It has been said that our cry is Destroy, destroy..... Why do we want to destroy? What do we want to get rid of? We want to destroy and get rid of a system which does no good and can do no good. We want to destroy it, because we want to construct a system which can be worked with success and will enable us to do good to the masses. Can you lay your hands on your breast and say that you can do anything for the masses under this system."*¹²

In his last speech to the Bengal Council, he said :

*"My answer to those who ask why I want to destroy is this : I want to destroy because this rotten structure is occupying the place where a beautiful mansion may be erected We want to destroy in order that we may be able to build up."*¹³

The Swarajists hoped that by taking part in the elections they would rouse public enthusiasm and conduct vigorous nationalist propaganda. They believed that lifting the ban on Council-entry was not fatal to Non-Cooperation, but would actually help

10. Ray, P. C. : Life and Times of C. R. Das, p. 189.

11. See Chintamani : Indian Politics Since the Mutiny pp. 102-103.

12. Ray : C. R. Das, p. 201.

13. Ibid. p. 233.

them in carrying it "into the very aisles and chancel of the Bureaucratic Church." Non-Cooperation, in their opinion, was merely a matter of mental attitude than the application of any rigid principle to the facts of national life with special reference to the bureaucracy, which governed that life. The principle underlying non-cooperation was one of self-reliance in all public activities calculated to resist the bureaucracy which obstructed national progress towards Swaraj. Council-entry was quite consistent with non-cooperation as they understood it. In other respects, they were with the orthodox followers of the Mahatma. They considered foreign yoke a galling experience and did not question India's fitness for Swaraj.

They took their lesson out of modern Irish history and pursued a policy first initiated at St. Stephen's by Charles Stewart Parnell before and after the Phoenix Park murders in Dublin. They aimed at creating dead-lock in the legislatures, blowing up the Dyarchy in the Provinces by their method of obstruction. By obstruction they meant resistance to the obstruction placed in their path to Swaraj by the Government. Their methods, on the destructive side, emphasised rejection of the votable part of the budgets and rejection of proposals emanating from the bureaucracy. On the constructive side, they sought to move resolutions necessary for the healthy growth of national life and displacement of bureaucracy. To make their policy effective, they intended to occupy every place open to the members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures by election, and serve on committees where it was possible to carry out obstruction. Outside the Council, they were to give whole-hearted support to the constructive programme of Mahatma Gandhi. Civil disobedience was to be the last resort against bureaucratic truculence. The Swarajists hoped to win Swaraj in the legislatures when the battle outside had turned out to be a fiasco. Dr. Zacharias makes the following interesting comments on them :

"The evolution of the Swaraj Party, it must be admitted, was far from edifying. Mr. Gandhi had realized how things were shaping, and at Belgaun had spun himself snugly into a cocoon of Khadi, leaving the Congress field to the politicians. The latter were in the position of people who wanted to keep their cake and to eat it

*at the same time. They considered it necessary, in order to retain their popularity, to talk extremism, and yet were resolved to essay parliamentarism."*¹⁴

Surendranath also writes in a strain of indignation :

*"If these obstructionist tactics inside the Councils are a prelude to revolutionary methods outside, by inflaming the minds of the masses, they are intelligible and perhaps logical ; otherwise they are futile and meaningless. They will not wreck the Government, but may deprive it of its popular element, and a return to the old bureaucratic system be the outcome of persistence in this policy. The obstructionists may temporarily pose as heroes who have defied an autocratic Government, but they will leave behind them for the country men the bitter harvest of their sinister activities"....."Without a party with a revolutionary outlook, the tactics of breaking the Councils can hardly be carried on successfully."*¹⁵

WORK IN THE LEGISLATURES :—

On account of their association with the Congress, which stood high in popular esteem, it was not difficult for the Swarajists to sweep the polls at most places in the elections of 1923. The Liberals, who controlled the Legislatures in the previous term, had been autocratically over-ruled by the Government even on ordinary routine business on various occasions. This gave the extremists ample justification to denounce both the Liberals and the Government. The election campaigns and conflicts this time were also interesting.

"The Extremists were the loudest in their denunciations of the Moderates, who in this as in other matters did not forget the cardinal principle of their creed—moderation in all things. The Moderates were classed by their political opponents as allies of the bureaucracy.....nor were their meetings safe from invasion. Noisy demonstrations and rowdism were often the features of meetings called by them..... Never in the whole course of my public life, now extending over nearly half a century, have I in our public meetings witnessed scenes so disgraceful,.....The words 'traitor' and 'shame' have

14. *Renascent India*, pp. 239-240.

15. *A Nation in Making* p. 381.

*become familiar terms in the vocabulary of the Swarajist wing of Non-Co-operation, which seeks to secure its triumph by soul-force. There was more of brute force... ..and what is most regrettable is that the young are dragged into these questionable proceedings with all their attendant demoralisation."*¹⁶

The Swaraj Party had brilliant success in the elections in the Central Provinces and in Bengal and was returned in sufficient strength to the Imperial Legislative Assembly. Pandit Motilal led the Swarajists in the Assembly and they counted a strong contingent of 45 out of 145 members. They were, however, too few to carry out effectively the policy of obstruction. They had to ally themselves with the Independents, a heterogeneous group of diverse opinions. On Feb. 18, 1924, Pandit Motilal carried by majority a resolution on the revision of the Act of 1919. It was as follows :

"This Assembly recommends to the Governor-General-in-Council to take steps to have the Government of India Act revised with a view to establish full responsible Government for India, and for the said purpose :

- (a) to summon at an early date representatives to a Round Table Conference to recommend, with due regard for the protection of the rights and interests of the important minorities, a constitution for India ; and*
- (b) after dissolving the Central Legislature, to place the said scheme before a newly elected Indian Legislature, and submit the same to the British Parliament to be embodied in a Statute.*

The Labour Government sympathised with the stand of the Swaraj Party but was haunted by the spectre of anarchy so much talked of by the bureaucracy in India. It was quite apparent that Lord Olivier, the new Secretary of State, was more cautious than his predecessor who belonged to the Conservative Party. He even consented to the revival of Bengal Regulations of 1818, which empowered the executive to imprison people without trial. The Government of India, however, appointed a committee under Sir Alexander Muddiman, the Home Member, to enquire into the defects inherent in the working of the India Act, 1919, and to

suggest remedies. Many eminent Indians like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Sivaswamy Iyer, M. A. Jinnah, Dr. R. P. Paranjpye served on this committee. The Government requested Motilalji to participate in its work. He declined the offer, saying that no enquiry within the limit, scope and extent prescribed could yield satisfactory results and that whoever served on it was committed to the structure, policy and purpose of the Act. The Swarajists also refused invitations to the levees and parties of the Viceroy as a protest against the non-settlement of the Indian problem. They succeeded in throwing out the Budget of 1924-25, compelling the Government to lean on its power of certification. To the Government, the issue was "Autocracy or Anarchy", to the Swarajists "Dyarchy or Swaraj." They secured some other notable successes. Mr. C. D. Iyengar's resolution urging the suppression of the Bengal Ordinance by an Act of the Legislature was passed by 58 against 45 votes. In February 1925, V. J. Patel introduced a Bill for the repeal of the State Prisoners Act of 1850, the Frontier Outrages Act of 1867, and the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act of 1921. It was carried except for the omission of the Frontier Outrages Act. The Government was also defeated on Raja's resolution urging the establishment of a Military College in India. The wrecking methods of the Swarajists could not, however, bring the Government to a stand-still. Later on, they adopted the policy of walking in and walking out of the Legislature, and C. Y. Chintamani makes interesting observation in this connection :

"Between March, 1926, and the dissolution of the then Assembly and Councils it was a regular scene, Congressmen walking in and walking out for reasons best known to themselves. They were characterized by one Finance Member in the United Provinces as "peripatetic patriots" while Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru described their theatricalities as "patriotism in locomotion."

*"They all stood for election again in 1926, but this time, atleast some of them found that the gilt was off the ginger bread. Electors were confused by the walk-in—walk-out policy."*¹⁷ (a)

The success of the Swarajists in Bengal and the Central Provinces was quite conspicuous. In Bengal, they were the largest party of 47 members. Lord Lytton, the Governor, requested C. R. Das, the leader of the majority party to form the ministry for the administration of the "transferred" departments. He politely refused and replied by organising an effective coalition with the 'National Party,' an independent group, to oppose the government. Twice in 1924 and 1925, the legislature dominated by his powerful personality threw out the proposals from the official side for the payment of salaries to the ministers. Two Muslim ministers carried on for some months without remuneration but resigned when, for the second time, the legislature voted down their emoluments. The Provincial Executive was compelled to seek a modification of the statutory rules for the legislature. In 1925, from his sick-bed, C. R. Das went to the Council Chamber "to drive the last nail into the coffin of dyarchy and write an epitaph on it." Lord Lytton was compelled "to divide between himself and the members of the Executive Council administration of the Transferred Departments." The Swarajist leader now "became an awful portent of danger and a lion in the path of the Indian bureaucracy."^{17 (b)} After his death the Swarajist opposition weakened but the government could not form a ministry. In 1926, the Swarajists withdrew altogether from the legislature, proclaiming that they had discredited Dyarchy and also destroyed it. The opposition to Dyarchy was almost a spectacular success in Bengal, where even in the third term of the legislature, the Governor was finally compelled to dissolve it. In the Central Provinces, the Swaraj Party during 1924-25 successfully played its part of constitutional opposition. The Simon Commission admits the success of the Swarajists—

"The only really well organised and disciplined party with a definite programme (though, it is true, a negative one) is that of the Swarajists. Only in Bengal and the Central Provinces did they, even temporarily, achieve their initial object of making dyarchy unworkable, and in the provinces they have tended every where, in varying degrees, to be transformed into an opposition

17. (b) Ray, P. C : C. R. Das p. 202.

*of a more constitutional kind, and have not infrequently played a useful part as keen and vigilant critics."*¹⁸

Their tactics of obstruction embarrassed the government and the parliamentary duels of this period—between the Swarajists and the official benches—constitute a brilliant chapter of nationalist history. They were not wholly effective as the Swarajist Party failed to establish a dominant position in all the provincial legislatures. They, however, demonstrated that the Reforms of 1919 were a charter of irresponsibility to the Executive heads and a denial of even elementary principles of democracy. C. R. Das was the brain and driving force behind the party, and under his leadership the party functioned as a solid organisation. Lord Olivier, the Secretary of State, did not take long time to recognise his political genius. He spoke about him as

*"a particularly upright and scrupulous politician, second only to Gandhi himself in saintliness of character. He is unquestionably a man of high and admirable ideals on behalf of his country which he has fairly and uncompromisingly expressed."*¹⁹

The death of this great son of Bengal on 16th June 1925 in the meridian of his full power and glory was a national calamity. After him the deluge—that was undoubtedly the prospect before the Swaraj party. Mahatma Gandhi had no faith in the councils and hardly interested himself in them. Pandit Motilal was too practical and constructive a brain to guide his followers successfully in their obstructionist programme.

DEMORALISATION OF THE COUNCIL-FRONT :—

The years 1925-27 saw demoralisation of the Council-front and prepared the ground for a fresh trial of strength with the bureaucracy. Inside the legislatures, the Swarajists failed to pursue the policy of "constant, continuous, uniform obstruction." Curiously enough, the spirit of "responsive cooperation" was gaining ground with them inspite of the fact that the Conservative Party was in power as the result of the general elections of October, 1924. Even C.R. Das was inclined towards cooperation

¹⁸. Report of the Indian Statutory Commission. Vol. I, p, 209.

¹⁹. Ranga Iyer, C S, : India in the Crucible p. 167.

with the government. At Faridpur Provincial Conference, he announced the following terms of settlement :

1. Cooperation with Government possible, if "some real responsibility is transferred to the people."
2. Swaraj to be guaranteed "to come automatically in the near future".
3. Practical demonstration of a change of heart on the part of the rulers ; atmosphere of trust, and peaceful settlement to be created by the rulers.
4. General amnesty to all political prisoners, and undertaking by the Swarajists not to, "by word, deed or gesture, encourage revolutionary propaganda and that we shall make every effort to put an end to such a movement."

This was his last political utterance and here he also made out a strong case for Dominion Status. At that time, the issue—Dominion Status or Swaraj, was very much debated in nationalist circles. According to him, Dominion Status was no servitude :

*"Indeed, the Empire idea gives us a vivid sense of many advantages. Dominion Status to-day is in no sense servitude. It is essentially an alliance by consent of those who form part of the Empire for material advantages in the real spirit of cooperation. Free alliance necessarily carries with it the right of separation."*²⁰

He felt that a purely obstructionist tactics could not bear fruit and lawlessness and repression were on the increase. He was distressed at the summary arrests and imprisonments of Bengali patriots. Subhas Bose was unnecessarily suspected as the brain of the revolutionary party and deported to Burma. He writes :

*"In Bengal the Left Wing was at a disadvantage for some time, because a large number of Congressmen belonging to that group were in prison either under Regulation III of 1818 or under the Bengal Ordinance.....From the middle of 1925 onwards there was a gradual watering down of the original Swarajist policy of undiluted opposition."*²¹

20. Ray. P. C. : C. R. Das, p. 115.

21. The Indian Struggle, p. 167.

After the death of C. R. Das, the Swarajists under Motilalji in the Central Assembly were drifting in the direction of cooperation. Lord Birkenhead's tribute to their party as "the most highly organised political party in India",²² succeeded in dislodging them from their obstruction. V. J. Patel consented to preside over the House. Motilalji accepted a seat on the Skeen Commission, composed of Indian members of the legislature under the Presidentship of Sir Andrew Skeen, Chief of the General Staff, to consider the recruitment and training of Indian cadets for the King's Commission. The years 1926-27 further demoralised the Council-front. The serious Hindu-Muslim clashes disintegrated the Swaraj Party. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai organised a new party of Congress Independents and rallied the Hindus to their banner. They held the opinion that opposition to the government injured the interests of the Hindus. The Swarajist Party in the C. P. also broke up into two wings, Responsivists and Non-Cooperators. Mr. S. B. Tambe, a prominent member of the party accepted membership of the Governor's Executive Council. In Bombay Presidency, the Swarajists openly advocated the theory of responsive cooperation. Motilalji's threat—"the diseased limb of the Swaraj Party must be amputated"—offended them all the more and emboldened them. The Bombay Council of the Swaraj Party made an open declaration in favour of the cult of responsiveness. Lord Irwin, the new Vice roy, conciliated a substantial part of the Swarajists by expressions of sympathy. His exhortations to the leaders of the two communities to stop mutual bickerings and make an honest effort at controlling communal tension were also quite inspiring.

The Swaraj party was clearly divided into two groups, the Responsivists and Non-cooperators, before the next general elections to the legislatures were held in November, 1926. The former were in favour of a policy of discriminate opposition instead of continuous obstruction. They advocated cooperation with the government, if it was in public interests and were eager to avail themselves of the government patronage by accepting seats on the government boards and ministries. The non-cooperators considered this policy as one of surrender and defeat. Pandit

Motilal tried to effect a compromise between the two wings of the party. He convened their joint meeting at Sabarmati in April 1926, and it was attended by Lajpat Rai, Kelkar, Jaykar, Aney, Dr. Moonje etc. The conference approved more or less of the principles of responsivism and laid down the following conditions of office acceptance :

1. That the Ministers should be made fully responsible to the Legislature, free from all control of Government ;
2. That an adequate proportion of the revenues be allotted for the development of nation-building departments ;
3. That Ministers be given full control of the services in the transferred departments.

But the Sabarmati pact failed to keep the Swaraj party united. The responsivists under Jaykar and Kelkar altogether separated from the Congress which finally laid down the policy of non-cooperation inside the Councils. The General Elections of 1926 were not a happy experience to the responsivists against non-cooperators. During all this time, while the Swarajist party was rent by internal conflicts, the devoted followers of the Mahatma were busy with the organisation of the All-India Spinner's Association and were extending its branches all over the country.

CHAPTER XI

PREPARATION AND FIGHT FOR SWARAJ (1928-30).

Rise in Political Thermometre—The Simon Commission—The All-Parties Conference—The Calcutta Congress of 1928—The Labour Government—Lahore Congress Session 1929—Civil Disobedience Movement 1930—The Simon Report and after.

RISE IN THE POLITICAL THERMOMETRE :—

"The year 1928 was, politically, a full year", writes Pandit Jawaharlal, "with plenty of activity all over the country."¹ Revolutionary impulses were moving the people forward. The country appeared to have recovered from the depression of 1919-22. Youth leagues were coming into existence and youth conferences discussed revolutionary ideology and technique and socio-economic problems of the day. The youth movement brought to the front of Indian politics two new leaders destined to play a leading role in the nationalist struggle. They were the idols of the educated youth and their whisper was a thunder to the bureaucracy. It is interesting to know what impression they made on the ruling class. Prof. Coatman, an ex-Police officer, wrote about Jawaharlal as follows :

*"An ex-member of the Harrow School Cadet Corps and once an ardent Anglophile, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has now one secret ambition, which is to rival Lenin or Stalin in the history of Communism."*²

He calls him "as a fisher wherever the waters are troubled", because he sponsored extremist resolutions at the Congress sessions. The other leader of the youth was Subhas Chandra Bose and the same writer compares the two :

"It seems, that history will write him (Nehru) down as a pinch-beck Lenin, and he has a younger and dangerous

1. Autobiography, p. 170.

2. Coatman, J. : Years of Destiny, p. 95.

*rival for the plaudits of the mob in a would-be Mussolini in Bengal. Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose holds the Bengal extremists on his side."*³

The Trade Union Movement was pushing itself steadily and its militant ideology was fostering class consciousness among the workers. Among the factory workers and peasants, there was the growth of Communist activity. The leaders of the Communist controlled labour and peasant associations were rending the air of industrial centres with cries of "Down with Motilal and Mahatma as useless bourgeois," and "Long Live Revolution". Labour strikes were frequent and the peasantry was astir with new life. The gallant struggle of the peasantry against the government in Guzerat exercised a regenerating effect on the rural community all over the country. The middle-class intelligentsia was free from the enchantment of Council-Chambers and was thinking in terms of active agitation. It was very much disappointed at the findings of the Skeen Committee published in April, 1927. It recommended the total Indiansation of half of the fighting forces within next twenty-five years. Pandit Motilal resigned membership of the committee before the report was drafted and he did not sign it. The industrial and merchant class was irritated at the Rupee Stabilisation Bill (1927) of Sir Basil Blackett, the Finance Member of the Government of India. It was based on the recommendations of a Royal Commission including Indians under Sir Hilton Young, which was appointed in 1925 to examine Indian currency and finance problems. It recommended the stabilisation of the rupee at the defacto value of 1s. 6 d. Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas pleaded for the pre-War parity of 1s. 4 d. and wrote a minute of dissent. The action of the government was construed as a deliberate attempt at exploiting India to the advantage of Great Britain. The nationalist press conducted strong campaign against it. The Rupee controversy, we are told, "generated enough heat in the country to throw out her frozen politics and set them in brisk motion". The Viceroy decided to pass the X'mas week in Bombay to conciliate the big business interests disturbed over currency legislation. Bombay was the Lancashire of India and he knew "that the shrewdest, most sustained, and most interested

attacks on the existing system of government in India originate among, and are carried on by the leaders of Bombay business and finance."⁴ The boycott of the Simon Commission and the repression which blazed in its trail vitalised political life and the temperature of Indian politics from now onwards continued rising.

THE BOYCOTT OF THE SIMON COMMISSION :—

The announcement about the Simon Commission in November 1927 was a propaganda stunt of the Tory cabinet. The general elections were due in England in 1929, and the formation of Labour Government was anticipated for the next term. The Act of 1919 provided for the appointment of a Statutory Commission to enquire into its working after ten years. The Conservatives did not want to leave its constitution for the Labour party which was supposed to be sympathetic towards India's aspirations. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, who was in England in the summer of 1927, first flung the unwelcome news on the Indian public that India was to have no representation on the Commission.

The Commission was merely an enquiring and reporting body, consisting of the representatives of different parties—two Labourites, one Liberal, and four Conservatives in all, under the Chairmanship of Sir John Simon of the Liberal party. It was exclusively British, although at the time, there were two Indians in the Parliament, Lord Sinha in the Lords and Mr. Saklatwala in the Commons. It was felt all over the country that Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State was posing as a conqueror and imposing his will on a subject people. India had not forgotten his speech to Oxford students in 1927 that :

"India is our prize possession. We in England have to live on it ; the Indians may live in it.....It is the task for you, the younger generation, to hold India to the last drop of your blood."

The cooperation of the labour and liberal members with the Conservatives on the Commission also shocked nationalist India and shook its confidence in the professions of British liberalism and socialism. Moreover, the Commission was to implement no definite policy towards India, and this omission was seriously resented by the leading brains of all communities. In Sept., 1925, the

4. Ibid pp. 172-173.

Legislative Assembly had again passed a resolution in favour of a Round Table Conference representing all Indian interests, to frame a scheme for making the government of the country fully responsible. The British Government took no heed of the resolution and the Assembly resolved on having no truck with the Commission. In Feb., 1928, it passed Lala Lajpat Rai's resolution that the constitution and the scheme of the Commission were wholly unacceptable and no member was to do anything with it "at any stage or in any form". The speeches at this occasion reflect the mood and temper of the House. S. Srinivasa Iyengar said that he wanted an enquiry into the fitness of the British people to rule India. Mr. Jayakar was cheered by the House when he rose and said :

"We waited until the Messiah came and his message of deliverance was uttered. It proved a veritable gospel of delusion."

Mr. M.A. Jinnah, the leader of the nationalist wing of Muslims, continued amidst prolonged cheers that to a self-respecting Indian there was no other alternative than boycott as he was not fit to sit with Sir John Simon as his equal. Pandit Motilal, the leader of the Congress party ably summed up the position :

"Every party has its own reasons for the boycott, but so long as all parties are agreed on the boycott it does not matter for what reasons."

And he stated the stand of his party as under :

*"We take our stand upon the broad principle that Parliament and the British public and the British Government have no shadow of a right to force a constitution upon us against our own will."*⁵

The opposition to the Commission bridged the differences between the different communities and political groups. During the discussions on Lalaji's motion the official bench was also inclined to fighting. Sir Basil Blackett, the leader of the House, tried to be even mischievous. He compared the All-India Congress to a spider in the middle of its web, and Mr. Jinnah and his party to the fly. "The spider may be hungry", he said,

5. Ranga Iyer, C. S. : India in the Crucible p. 144. See also pp 135-145.

"but why should the fly be in such a hurry."⁶ When the resolution was carried, a reporter of the nationalist press, sitting in the press-gallery, "hurled an attachi-case down on the head of Sir Basil Blackett." Indeed, the enthusiasm for the resolution was so great that a member of the Nationalist Party lying sick in Karachi came up to vote in its favour. He died before the vote could be taken.

The Commission landed in Bombay on February, 3, 1928 and was greeted by hartal. The boycott of the Commission at almost all the cities was perfect. Only show-boys of the Government were available to participate in the reception parties and to hold consultations with it. The Liberal Federation cooperated with the Congress in the boycott. The Commission was pursued by black flags and hostile crowds shouting—"Go-back." Pandit Nehru writes that while its members were staying at the Western Hotel in New Delhi, the jackals infesting the waste places of the capital disturbed them. They were greatly irritated thinking that people were pursuing them even at night. There were conflicts between the police and the people at various places but Lahore "brought matters to a head and suddenly sent a thrill of indignation throughout the country." Pandit Nehru comments :

*"The anti-Simon Commission demonstration there was headed by Lala Lajpat Rai, and as he stood by the road-side in front of the thousands of demonstrators he was assaulted and beaten on his chest with a baton by a young English police officer. There had been no attempt whatever on the part of the crowd, much less on the part of Lalaji, to indulge in any methods of violence. Even so, as he stood peacefully by, he and many of his companions were severely beaten by the police."*⁷

Lalaji was suffering from heart disease and serious injury on his chest hastened his death a few weeks later. The assault on him added to the vigour of demonstrations against the Commission. Even leaders like Jawaharlal felt "the baton and lathi blows of the police." There was revival of terroristic activity, most particularly in Bengal and the Punjab. Bhagat Singh and B. K. Dut created a stir in the country by throwing two bombs from th

6. Coatman—p. 194.

7. Autobiography, p. 174.

visitor's gallery on to the floor of the Assembly. A young police officer, supposed to have hit Lalaji, was shot dead in Labore. The popularity of Bhagat Singh in Northern India was amazing as he appeared to vindicate the honour of the nation. The drift towards violence led both the Congress and the Government to act.

ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE:—

Indian nationalism resented the explanation of Lord Birkenhead in the House of Lords as to why no Indians were appointed on the Commission. "Does any one suppose that there would have been a unanimous report? he asked and enlarged the theme of Hindu-Muslim clashes and dissensions. He said:

*"It is obvious—because the tension and the acuteness to-day of these unhappy communal quarrels are greater in my judgment than they have been for some twelve or thirteen years in Indian history—that you would have a very strong partisan Hindu report, you would have a very strong Moslem report, and you would have three or four other dissenting Reports from various sections deeply interested in the decisions which are taken."*⁸

Indian nationalism replied that Hindus and Muslims could never learn to live together peacefully while the British held them in leash. As a retort to the Secretary of State, the Congress convened an All-Parties Conference in Delhi in Feb.-March 1928 to deliberate on the constitution of India on the basis of full responsible government. A committee including Sir Ali Imam, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Subhash Chandra Bose under Pandit Motilal was set up to outline a scheme of the constitution. The conference, representing the Liberal Federation, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Sikh League, the Indian Christians, the States' Peoples Conference and the Congress considered the Nehru Report in August 1928 at Lucknow. It approved of the report on the whole although the opposition of communalists prevented its ratification by the League. The A. I. C. C. endorsed its recommendations as "a great step towards political advance." The report outlined the same constitutional status for India in the British Empire as the Self-Governing Dominions. There was to be complete transfer of control and responsibility from the

people of England to the people of India. The executive was to be responsible to the legislature elected on adult suffrage. It recommended reservation of seats in the case of Muslim minorities in general and the Hindu minority in the N. W. F. Province and Baluchistan for a period of ten years on the population basis. It condemned communal electorates as having "no place in any system of representation conceived in national interests." They reduced the two communities "to continually warring camps, thus in practice, defeating their own purpose viz., the safeguarding of minority rights." The report recommended the redistribution of all provinces on the linguistic basis. It condemned "the autocratic form of government in the States," but supported the rights and privileges of the Princes as rulers. The report represented "far-reaching agreements on fundamental rights of citizenship, universal adult suffrage and abolition of communal electorates."⁹ The Motilal Nehru report was conservative in the sense that it guaranteed all vested interests. It was, however, a brilliant constitutional document embodying the national demand. It met all interests and claims in an enlightened spirit. It was unfortunate that narrow minded leaders of the Hindu and Muslim communities indulged in undignified wrangles over it.

THE CALCUTTA CONGRESS OF 1928 :—

The Calcutta Congress of Dec., 1928, under the Presidency of Pandit Motilal met in a tense atmosphere created by the boycott of the Commission. It was, nevertheless, prepared to test the sincerity of the government before precipitating a crisis. Panditji declared that freedom was their destination and he wanted the British government to begin "at the point which the All-Parties conference have now arrived and push forward with them as far as they would go." There was vigorous opposition to the ideal of Dominion Status contemplated in the report by Jawaharlal and Subhas Chandra Bose. They were Secretaries of the Independence League started in November 1920 under the inspiration of S. Srinivasa Iyengar, a lawyer politician of Madras, a rival of, but inferior in ability, to Pandit Motilal. They were in a state of exaltation as well as irritation. They "expounded a Sinn Fein policy : establishment of their own assemblies, councils, courts, etc. and refusal to use the British institutions," to

9. See the Indian National Demand, Congress Publication.

achieve complete independence. This was "non-cooperation over again, without a Mahatma to lead the common people in its support but, on the other hand, with a widely, convinced intelligentsia, and they were Gandhiji's chief stumbling block."¹⁰ They considered the Calcutta Congress after the Madras Congress of 1927 something of the nature of an anti-climax. Mahatma Gandhi silenced them by retorting that independence was not made by the juggling of words and was made of sterner stuff and if it was to be uttered just as an empty formula there was no honour behind it. The Congress accepted him as its sole guide, issued an ultimatum to the Government, that if principles of the constitution agreed to at the All Parties Conference were not accepted in full on or before 31st Dec., 1929, it will organise a campaign of non-violent non-cooperation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon. This resolution was the first definite demand for Self-Government backed by a threat from the Congress Command. It took the rudder of the Congress craft from the hands of the Swarajists and, from now, Gandhiji as its helmsman was to steer its course through the uncharted waters of civil disobedience. The Congress decided to continue propaganda for Swaraj along with its constructive work of consolidating the national organisation.

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT : —

The Simon Commission finished its enquiries in two trips to India in April 1929, and in May the elections returned Labour Ministry under MacDonald. The leaders had high hopes from the Labour party and the circumstances which forced the Congress into a declaration of war at the historic Lahore Session (1929) deserve careful study.

The year 1929 saw more of internal unrest. The youth of the lower middle-class was drifting towards violence and conditions of labour were deteriorating. The slight rise in their wages could not counterbalance the rise in prices. There was also serious contraction of labour-employment in the cotton mills and the fear of unemployment was widespread. The following

10. Alexander, H. G. : The Indian Ferment pp. 111-112. The Madras session of Dec, 1927 under the Presidentship of Shri Iyengar had declared in favour of complete independence.

figures of the average daily numbers of persons employed in the cotton mills in Bombay would bear it out :

1926	148,254
1927	145,005
1928	118,617
1929	118,368.

The position was not hopeful in other industrial centres. We have in support of it the following figures of persons employed in the Tata Iron and Steel Company at Jamshedpur during the same period :

1926-27	32,521
1927-28	31,484
1928-29	28,842
1929-30	28,660. ¹¹

The conditions of service for the labour class were also most despicable. The life of the jute workers in Bengal in particular was most miserable. Semi-naked, half-starved women worked on bare pittance "so that a broad river of wealth should flow ceaselessly to Glasgow and Dundee, as well as to some pockets in India." There was a general strike in the Bengal Jute Mills, and the Iron Works, the Tin Plate Works at Jamshedpur, the Textile Mills in the Bombay Presidency were all affected by strikes on stupendous scale. Pandit Nehru offers the following comments on them :

*"And so there was industrial unrest and labour troubles and the gigantic strikes in Bombay which impressed everybody and frightened both the employers and the Government. The Labour Movement was becoming class conscious, militant and dangerous both in ideology and in organisation."*¹²

In March 1929, the Government struck hard at the labour movement by arresting its prominent workers. The Trade Union movement was dreaded as "one of the most fruitful forces working for inter-communal unity."¹³ It had to be consequently sternly suppressed. Thirty-one of its leaders were charged with conspiracy "to deprive the King of the sovereignty of India." They were lodged in Meerut Jail as under-trial prisoners for four years,

11. Report, Royal Commission on Labour; 1931, p. 33.

12. Autobiography, p. 188.

13. tman, J. : p. 201.

denied bail and trial by jury and their sentence was delayed till January 1933. The government spent sixteen lacs of rupees on their prosecution to prove that they were working in collaboration with the Communist International to establish the Russian political system. Twenty seven of them were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment and even transportation for life. Throughout 1929, trade unions were also agitated over the appointment of Whitley Commission on labour and the left wing was entirely in favour of boycotting it. The national movement, inspite of its bourgeois outlook, could not remain untouched by the ferment in the proletariat.

The gesture of conciliation made by the Labour Government had no effect on the country which was full of excitement and anger. At the end of June 1929, Lord Irwin proceeded to England to place before His Majesty's Government, "the different stand-points of those who can speak for Indian political opinion." He quoted the following extract from his own Instrument of Instructions :

"Above all things it is our will and pleasure that the plans laid by our Parliament for the progressive realization of Responsible Government in British India, as an integral part of our Empire, may come to fruition, to the end that British India may attain its due place among the Dominions "

On returning from England, he made a declaration on 31st October, that His Majesty's Government desired a Conference with representatives of British India and the States "for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals which it would later be the duty of H. M. G. to submit to Parliament." The goal of British policy was announced as the gradual development of self-governing institutions and that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress was the attainment of Dominion Status.¹⁴ The announcement was very cautious, well-worded and hardly made any commitment. It made no advance on Montagu's declaration of August 1917. The liberal nationalists, nevertheless, responded to the Viceroy's call for cooperation. They submitted a manifesto to the government offering their cooperation to evolve a scheme of

Dominion Constitution for India and made the following suggestions for the success of the Conference :

- (1) A policy of general conciliation be adopted to induce a calmer atmosphere :
- (2) Amnesty to political prisoners :
- (3) Effective representation of progressive political organisations, particularly the Indian National Congress.

They pressed the government to convene the Conference "as expeditiously as possible" and make the public feel "that a new era has commenced even from to-day, and that the new constitution is to be but a register of that fact." In response to the requests of his English friends, Gandhiji expressed sympathy with the manifesto and said that he was "dying for cooperation," "I can wait for a Dominion constitution if I can get real Dominion Status in action," he declared. He wanted the British government to show a real desire to see India free and a self-respecting nation, and substitute the steel-bayonet rule by the good-will of the people.¹⁵

But the debates on Labour policy towards India in the Parliament revealed the true intentions of the Britisher. Churchill condemned Dominion Status as a crime and Lord Birkenhead and Lord Reading agreed with him. The Liberals were annoyed at the insult to Sir John Simon. The Labour Government was hardly prepared for a vote of censure on the Indian issue. In the House of Lords, Lloyd George "unrolled the map of despotism" and forced Wedgewood Benn, the Secretary of State, to make a statement that there was hardly any vital change in policy. Indian nationalism was exasperated at the duplicity of the British nation. The Labour party painted Swaraj to India and autocracy to England. The Congress Leaders, Gandhiji, Motilalji on their way to the Lahore Session, had an interview with the Viceroy, who was quite in good humour, unaffected by the bomb outrage on his train at reaching Delhi from Hyderabad. They wanted an assurance from him that the R. T. C. was to proceed on the basis of full Dominion Status but the Viceroy could not make that promise in definite terms.

LAHORE SESSION, DEC. 1929 :—

Frustrated at its negotiations with the Government, the Congress met at Lahore in 1929 in an atmosphere of excitement. The election of Pandit Jawaharlal as its President showed that the Congress elders had resolved on direct action. The President-elect declared that he was a socialist and a republican and no believer in Kings and Princes. He fulminated against Imperialism which was flouting national demand for freedom. He justified non-violence as a policy because there was no possibility of organised mass revolt. He denounced secret methods of struggle and said that the Indian struggle was an open conspiracy against British rule. It was also an honourable and a fair fight as :

*"We, who take this perilous path of national strife, do so because there is no other way to an honourable peace. But we long for peace, and the hand of fellow-ship will always be stretched out to all who may care to grasp it. But behind the hand will be a body which will not bend to injustice and a mind that will not surrender on any vital point."*¹⁶

The Congress declared that nothing could be gained in the existing circumstances by participation in the Round Table Conferences. It also resolved that the entire scheme of the Nehru Committee had lapsed and the creed of the Congress from now onwards was *Purna Swaraj* i. e. complete independence with no link with the Commonwealth. The time of the ultimatum issued at the Calcutta Session was fast expiring and the Congress was morally obliged to unfurl the flag of *Swaraj* at the cold midnight of 31st. December, 1929. As a preliminary step towards the campaign for independence, Congress-men were asked not to participate in future elections, and to resign their seats from legislatures and official committees. The A. I. C. C. was authorized to conduct Civil Disobedience "whether in selected areas or otherwise, and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary." There were some, Srinivasa Ayengar and Subhas Chandra Bose in particular, who objected to the Congress resolution on *Swaraj*, as it was not an emphatic declaration of war against the government. They formed the Congress Democratic Party to resist the "tyranny" of the majority and invoked the

16. Presidential Address, Lahore Congress, 1929.

spirit of C. R. Das to guide it. They cooperated with the Congress in its programme, policies, and activities directed towards the attainment of independence.

The bonafides of the right wing of the Congress in passing the 'Independence' resolution were seriously questioned by the leftists. In his letter to the Viceroy, dated March 2nd, 1930, the Mahatma, however, clarified his stand. He explained why he was forced to launch civil disobedience :

*"In common with many of my country-men I had hugged the fond hope that the proposed Round Table Conference might furnish a solution..... The Delhi interview having miscarried, there was no option for Pandit Motilal Nehru and myself but to take steps to carry out the solemn resolution of the Congress arrived at in Calcutta at its session in 1928. But the resolution of independence should cause no alarm if the word Dominion Status mentioned in your announcement had been used in its accepted sense. For has it not been admitted by responsible British statesmen that Dominion Status is virtual independence."*¹⁶ (a)

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT (1930):—

To India, the new year began with 26th January, 1930 as Purna Swaraj Day. All over the country, the Purna Swaraj declaration was read to the people at public meetings. It began as follows :

"We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives the people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British

connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence."

The rest of the declaration was an elaboration of the main thesis—the fourfold disaster under foreign rule, and concluded :

"We recognise, however, that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will, therefore, prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes."

The celebrations on the Independence Day revealed "the earnest and enthusiastic mood of the country, and that the time was ripe for action."¹⁷ The resignation of the members of the Congress and Nationalist parties proclaimed non-cooperation inside the Assembly. By Feb. 1930, 172 members of the legislatures had resigned. The A. I. C. C. at its meetings on Feb. 14-16 authorized Gandhiji to start Civil Disobedience. The Government had begun repression at full speed from the start. Subhas Babu and many others were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment. Before starting civil disobedience, Gandhiji warned the Viceroy and recounted the tale of India's ruination under foreign rule. The Viceroy dismissed his letter with a curt reply. The Mahatma then communicated his decision to resort to civil disobedience :

*"On bended knees, I asked for bread and received a stone instead India is a vast prison-house. I repudiate this (British) Law and regard it as my sacred duty to break the mournful monotony of compulsory peace that is choking the heart of the Nation for want of free vent."*¹⁸

Besides, he believed that he was saving the country from violence. He wrote :

*"Civil Disobedience alone, can save the country from impending lawlessness and secret crime, since there is a party of violence in the country, which will not listen to speeches, resolutions or conferences, but believes only in direct action."*¹⁹

17. Nehru, J : Autobiography, p. 209.

18. Pattabhi, Vol. I p. 377.

19. Subhas Bose : The Indian Struggle p. 247.

THE DANDI MARCH :—

He decided to start Salt-Satyagraha with the members of his Ashram at Dandi, a sea-side village, two hundred miles distant from Sabarmati. Vallabhbhai Patel moved in advance and his arrest roused Guzerat from its torpor. About 75,000 peasants gathered at Sabarmati to take a solemn pledge not to rest in peace till India was free. Gandhiji accompanied by his trained contingent of seventy-nine began his ceremonial march on March 12. His campaign against the Salt-laws was a symbolic resistance calculated to stir up the dormant energies of the nation and it succeeded as such. It kindled the powerful fire of patriotism and marked the beginning of a great movement of national emancipation. The 'naked fakir' throughout the march received soul-stirring ovation from the people. On April 6, the day of Jallianwallah massacre, after penance and purification, he proceeded to break the Salt-law by picking up salt on the sea-shore. It was a call to the nation to manufacture salt in defiance of the government regulations. This attempt to smash the Government's salt monopoly was characterised by H. N. Brailsford, a British Socialist, who was in India in 1930, as "the kindergarten stage of revolution." He writes :

*"One smiles at the notion that the King-Emperor can be unseated by boiling sea-water in a kettle.....He (Gandhiji) staged his salt-making as a quasi-religious pilgrimage. Its pathetic innocence helped this law-abiding people to take the first plunge into disobedience."*²⁰

The week which followed was of tremendous enthusiasm. The arrest of the Mahatma on 5th May intensified the movement.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE :—

Before his march the Mahatma had given a call for a fight to the finish. In an article dated 27th Feb.—"When I am arrested," he wrote :

*"This time, on my arrest, there is to be no mute passive non-violence, but non-violence of the activist type should be set in motion, so that not a single believer in non-violence as an article of faith for the purpose of achieving India's goal should find himself free or alive at the end of the effort, to submit any longer to the existing slavery."*²¹

20. Brailsford, H. N. : Rebel India p. 23.

21. Pattabhi, Vol. I p. 330.

The call was obeyed and soon after his arrest there were hartals and strikes all over the country. The Working Committee pressed the nation to carry on civil disobedience with redoubled vigour. It called upon students, workers, peasants, lawyers, merchants, government servants to unite and make a supreme effort to achieve Swaraj. It inaugurated the no-tax campaign, boycott of liquor, toddy and foreign cloth. The movement was now definitely in a subversive stage and all its items had their root in economic nationalism. It was generously subsidised by Bombay mill-owners and their wives and daughters even courted imprisonment. The non-violent rebellion spread rapidly from the towns to the rural areas, and it demonstrated that the Mahatma was not an extinct volcano. He was a live force and Brailsford comments :

*"The unique personality of Mr. Gandhi played a decisive part in firing India for this struggle. Without him she could not have achieved this spectacular unity. He touched, as no leader before him had ever done, her traditional springs of emotion. He gave her effort the solemnity of a high moral endeavour, and appealed to a faith that had its root in racial instinct. But without this material background, the nationalist movement would never have attained these dimensions, would never have roused the villages, nor enlisted the capitalists in its ranks."*²²

From the very beginning the results of the movement were quite encouraging. We are told that :

*"By the autumn of 1930 imports of cotton piece goods had dropped to between a third and a fourth of what they were in the same months of the previous year. Imported cigarettes had fallen in value to a sixth of the old figure. Sixteen British owned mills in Bombay had been closed down, and thirty-two thousand textile workers were idle. On the other hand, the India owned mills were often working double shifts, and were adapting their machinery to spin the finer counts, which hitherto had been imported."*²³

22. Rebel India. p. 29.

23. Ibid p. 26.

The Government also put into motion its whole machinery of terror. At this occasion, British Indian services gave ample evidence of their unpatriotic and mercenary outlook. The brutal repression practised by the constabulary on peaceful processions, the barbarous lathi-charges on non-violent civil resisters, the molestation of feminine life remain an eloquent testimony to the degeneration of Indian character in British service. In almost every despatch, the foreign correspondents in India were reporting on the brutality of the police in dispersing prohibited meetings, beating hard the crowds squatting silent on the ground, spinning and repeating the hymns of Swaraj. Students were beaten along with their teachers even inside the class-rooms. The whole government stood condemned in the eye of the nation and it is difficult to cite in full the tragic story of repression. The occurrences at Peshawar on 23rd. April and at other places were horrible and blood-curdling. All over the country, people were sentenced to long imprisonments, their properties were confiscated and their relations humiliated. Rev. Verrier Elwins, in his "Deserted Villages of Guzerat", describes how thousands of peasants were uprooted from their homes from the police 'Zoolum'. The facts mentioned by him show "the determination of the Indian masses to win freedom; they also illustrate, all too tragically, the repression which is an inevitable result of the domination of one nation by another."²⁴

THE SIMON REPORT AND AFTER :—

Repression and the publication of the Simon Report in June 1930 served only to intensify the feeling against the British. The following were the important recommendations of the Commission.

1. The future development of India must be on federal lines.
2. Each Province should, as far as possible, be mistress in her own house. The Governor to be given over-riding powers over the Legislature.
3. Enlargement of the Provincial Legislative Councils.
4. The Lower House of the Central Legislature to be called the Federal Assembly. It should be enlarged and be

²⁴. See Zacharias : nascent India, footnote p. 271.

elected by the Provincial Councils. The Upper House, the Council of State, to remain as at present.

5. No responsibility at the 'centre. The Governor-General to be vested with power to select and appoint the members of his Executive Council. His powers to be enlarged in some matters.
6. Reduction in the functions and membership of the Council of the Secretary of State for India.
7. The setting up of a Council of Greater India of the representatives of the States and British India for consultative purposes.
8. The presence of British troops and British Officers in Indian regiments essential for many years. The Commander-in-Chief should not be a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council and not to sit in the Legislature.
9. Creation of a Provincial Financial Fund to ensure adequate resources to the Provinces.
10. The High Courts should be under the control of the Government of India.
11. Separation of Burma from India in the new constitution.
12. The question of making Sind and Orissa into separate provinces to be given further expert examination.²⁵

The Simon Commission did not offer even palliatives to Indian nationalism. The federation was a very distant ideal and responsibility at the centre was hardly contemplated. The British Parliamentary system was not suitable for India, a land of universal illiteracy and chronic Hindu-Muslim discord—so thought the members of the Commission. Indian nationalism did not now expect much from the Round Table Conference and had to keep to the struggle. The boycott of the British cloth was an unexpected success. In Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, its imports fell by 95% by November, 1930. The Punjab, U. P., Guzerat and Bengal made magnificent contribution to the no-tax campaign. In the Central Provinces, forest satyagraha was eminently successful. In the frontier province, the Khudai Khidmatgars carried on the movement in a disciplined non-violent manner. The Congress organised regular Ambulance Service and field

hospitals to rescue the victims of the police lathi charges left wounded on the field. A magnificent feature of the movement was the awakening among women. They actively participated in the boycott programme and in Delhi about 1600 women were imprisoned in connection with the picketting of liquor shops. The Muslims, leaving those of the Frontier Province, were certainly indifferent. The Ali brothers and other Khilafatists made common cause with the bureaucracy and dissuaded their co-religionists from joining the Satyagraha. About the end of the year there was relaxation in civil resistance. The attention of the intelligentsia was diverted on to the St. James Palace in London. Here the Prime Minister inaugurated the first session of the Round Table Conference on 12th November, 1930.

CHAPTER XII

THE FATEFUL YEARS (1931—38).

Sapru-Jayakar negotiations—The first R. T. C.—Release of Gandhiji—Gandhi-Irwin Pact—Karachi Congress of 1931—The second R. T. C.—Civil Disobedience (1932—34)—MacDonald Award—Poona Pact—Withdrawal of the movement—Reactions—Parliamentarism (1935—38).

SAPRU-JAYAKAR NEGOTIATIONS :—

As the movement developed revolutionary methods came into play. Early in April 1930, a group of young men belonging to a local revolutionary party led by Surjya Kumar Sen raided the Chittagong Armoury. They shot the guards on duty, captured its ammunition and retired to the hills to continue guerrilla warfare. They were ultimately overpowered but many members of the party evaded arrest and kept up their terroristic activities in the later period. Soon after the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi, we find that in Sholapur, a large industrial centre in Bombay Presidency, people rose in revolt and took complete possession of the town. It was only with the help of the troops rushed from Bombay and other places that British authority could be restored. Labour was undoubtedly on the move. In Bombay alone, forty out of the eighty mills suffered from the strike of about 50,000 men, and the workers of B. B. & C. I. Rly. and G. I. P. Rly. workshops joined them. The position of the agriculturists was also desperate on account of the fall in the world prices of raw materials and foodstuffs and peasant risings became frequent. The British authorities had to fire on unarmed workers and peasants. In the different provinces, the youth of the lower middle class was resorting to violent methods. Towards the close of the year 1930, we are told, that hardly a week passed without a bomb being thrown or a British Official being murdered. It is certainly difficult to doubt the authenticity of facts stated by Lord Zetland in this connection. He writes :

*"Concurrently with these activities was to be observed an alarming recrudescence of the terrorist movement in various parts of India, and notably in Bengal. The most revolting of the outrages perpetrated by members of the Bengal Secret Societies was the treacherous and cold-blooded murder of an English magistrate on Dec. 14th, by two Bengali girls in their teens, armed with pistols. This crime was followed by the attempt, also by a Bengali girl, early in the year 1932, to assassinate Sir Stanley Jackson, the Governor of the Presidency. But these were only the latest of a formidable series of outrages. Earlier in the year 1931 an English judge had been murdered in the broad light of day while at work in his Court in Calcutta, this crime following at an interval of a week only an attempt to assassinate Sir E. Hotson, the acting Governor of Bombay. During the previous year the Inspector-General of Police and the Inspector-General of Prisons in Bengal had both lost their lives at the hands of the assassins, and an attempt had been made on the life of Sir G. de Montmorency, the Governor of the Punjab. These are but examples of the murders and attempted murders which marked the months during which the Round Table Conference was at work. And while these events were taking place in the interior of the continent the organisation known as the Red Shirts, inspired by agents of the Indian National Congress, was causing apprehension by its seditious activities on the North-West Frontier."*¹

The upper middle-class and capitalist strata of society was evidently nervous at this state of affairs and appealed to the Mahatma to abandon the fight. The representatives of the moderate wing of nationalism, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and M. R. Jayakar made feverish efforts at securing the participation of the Congress in the Round Table Conference. They negotiated with the Viceroy and the Congress High Command. They first interviewed Pandit Motilal and Pandit Jawaharlal and then met Gandhiji on July 23-24, 1930. The Nehrus, Vallabhbhai Patel, Jairamdas Doulatram, Dr. Syed Mahmud and other prominent

1. Zetland : Steps towards Indian Home Rule. pp. 92-93.

leaders were moved to Yerbadā to confer with Gandhiji. The Government was over-eager to arrive at a compromise. The Congress asked the Government to concede the following points :

1. India's right to secede at will.
2. Grant of a National Government responsible to the people with full control of defence and finance.
3. India's right to submit to an impartial scrutiny the so-called public debts of India.

These demands were beyond the anticipations of the ruling class and the Viceroy refused to negotiate on their basis. He, however, promised to move the local governments to consider the release of political prisoners in a generous spirit but blamed the Congress for disturbing normal conditions. The Congress decision not to participate in the R. T. C. has been characterized by Lord Zetland, as an act "singularly lacking in political wisdom." He was impressed by Gandhiji as a prophet but not as a political leader.² The first session of the R. T. C. was indeed the most important one as it laid down the main lines of constitutional development of India in future. The Congress could hardly gain anything for the country by participating in the second session.

THE FIRST R. T. C. :—

The Prime-Minister, Mr. MacDonald, opened the first R. T. C. on November, 12, 1930 and its session continued till January 19, 1931. He assigned two tasks to the Conference first to work and second to evolve a constitution which could be treated by posterity as a sacred inheritance. He stated that the Central Legislature was to be constituted on a federal basis with the States and the Provinces as federating units. He was also prepared to recognise the principle of responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature. But Defence and External Affairs were to be treated as reserve subjects and the Governor-General was to be vested with special responsibilities to maintain the tranquility of the state. He announced the British policy in regard to the future constitution as follows :

(a) "The view of His Majesty's Government is that responsibility for the Government of India should be placed upon the legislatures, Central and Provincial with such provisi-

2. Ibid pp. 68-69.

as may be necessary to guarantee, during a period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances, and also with such guarantees as are required by the minorities to protect their political liberties and rights."

(b) "In such statutory safeguards as may be made for meeting the needs of the transitional period, it will be the primary concern of H. M. G. to see that the reserved powers are so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new constitution to full responsibility for her own Government."³

The policy laid down for the Conference was completely reactionary. The transitional period was not defined and the safeguards and responsibilities were intended to retain the bureaucracy in possession of full power. The Conference was composed of nominated members, most of whom could be relied upon to play the British game. The British delegation counted 16 members. The Indian States Delegation 16, and the British India Delegation 57 members. The only result of the Conference was that the Labour Government was convinced of India's desire for Dominion Status at the earliest moment. Even the Maharaja of Bikaner declared at the very first business meeting on November 17, 1930 that the Princely order was on the side of progress and would not allow themselves to be arrayed against the realization of the just hopes of their fellow-countrymen in British India. The ideal of an All India Federation appealed to all sections of the delegates. It was plain that any new constitution had to scrap the proposals of the Simon Report and that resistance to the demand for responsibility at the centre would provoke indignation. The Muslim reactionaries at the Conference made every effort to entrench themselves in guarded positions held by the British. They demanded safeguards for their community, which the Hindu delegates found difficult to concede. Maulana Muhammad Ali was now in his true colours and in a fighting mood. He told the Conference that Islam was not confined to India—"I belong to two circles of equal size but which are not concentric. One is India and the other is the Muslim world.....We are not nationalists but supernationals."⁴ The net result of the first session of Round Table

3. Patabhi : History of the Congress, Vol I, pp. 423-24

4. Coupland, R. : The Indian Problem Part I p. 121.

Conference was the offer to India of two bitter pills—"writes Subhas Babu, "Safeguards and Federation. To make these pills eatable, they were sugar-coated with 'Responsibility.'"⁵

But without the Congress, the Conference looked like an empty pageant, a tamasha of communalists and reactionaries dancing to the British fiddling. The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, in his address to the Legislative Assembly appealed to the Mahatma for his cooperation in view of the terroristic developments in the country. The British Prime Minister also expressed his sentiments that "if in the meantime there is response to the Viceroy's appeal from those engaged at present in Civil Disobedience, steps will be taken to enlist their services."⁶

RELEASE OF GANDHIJI :—

On January 25, 1931, Lord Irwin ordered unconditional release of Gandhiji and nineteen old members of the Congress Executive so that they could have full discussion among themselves and with the acting Working Committee on the Prime Minister's statement of 19th January. Owing to the serious illness of Motilal ji, the released members met at his residence, the Swaraj Bhawan, and they resolved on compromise. They issued instructions to the Congress Committees to organise no new campaigns. Gandhiji was given the powers of a plenipotentiary to negotiate a settlement with the Government.

GANDHI-IRWIN PACT :—

Gandhiji's conferences with the Viceroy began on 17th Feb. and the pact was signed on 5th March 1931. At Delhi, we are informed that :

*"The Mahatma was surrounded by wealthy aristocrats and by politicians who were dying for a settlement and on the side of the Working Committee there was no one with sufficient personality who could force his views on the Mahatma. Even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who could have done so, failed on this occasion and as for the other members of the Working Committee, most, if not all, of them were more anxious for a settlement than the Mahatma himself."*⁷

5. The Indian Struggle, p. 275.

6. Patabhi, Vol. I pp. 423-24.

7. Bose : The Indian Struggle, p. 280. Motilalji at this time was seriously ill and he died on Feb. 7, 1931.

According to the Delhi Pact, the Satyagraha prisoners were to be released and the Congress was to withdraw boycott as a political weapon to exert pressure for political ends. The Government promised to withdraw the ordinances promulgated in connection with the movement and the Mahatma promised to discontinue Civil Disobedience. The terms of the pact are summarised below :

Mahatma Gandhi agreed on behalf of the Congress :

1. To suspend the Civil Disobedience Movement.
2. To participate in the deliberations of the forthcoming Round Table Conference for drafting a constitution for India on the basis of (a) Federation (b) Responsibility and (c) adjustments and safeguards that may be necessary in the interests of India.
3. To forego the demand for an investigation into the allegations of police authorities in different parts of India.

The Viceroy agreed :

1. To release simultaneously all political prisoners incarcerated in connection with the non-violent movement.
2. To restore confiscated property and land to the owners where it had not been already sold or auctioned by the Government.
3. To withdraw the emergency ordinances.
4. To permit people who live within a certain distance of the sea-shore to collect or manufacture salt free of duty.
5. To permit peaceful picketing of liquor, opium and foreign-cloth shops—the last item as an encouragement to the Swadeshi movement.

The conduct of Gandhiji and the Working Committee in concluding the pact provoked bitter controversy in the Congress circles. The radical elements interpreted it as a tame surrender of Indian Nationalism to British Imperialism. The Mahatma was criticised for side-tracking a vigorous mass movement and abandoning the fight for Swaraj abruptly. It was said that he recanted from the struggle as a concession to Indian Capitalism. But Gandhiji claimed it as a victory for both sides and his action was endorsed by the Congress at the next session. The struggle for independence during the past twelve months in which millions took part and suffered, was described by him as "a heroic period

in the modern history of India." According to him, the movement demonstrated the great power of non-violence, and that the miraculous mass awakening was due to "the mysterious yet unfailling effect of non-violence." He said :

*"After all, it is hardly yet a full year since the Dandi March. One year in the life of an experiment affecting 300 millions of human beings is but a second in the cycle of time."*⁸

KARACHI CONGRESS SESSION, 25th MARCH 1931 :—

Young India was not in a mood of compromise and was indignant at the execution of Bhagat Singh and his comrades for whom Gandhiji had failed to secure pardon from the Viceroy. Gandhiji and others were greeted by black-flag demonstrations. The orgies of blood in the serious Hindu-Muslim clash at Kanpur, the murder of Ganesh Shanker, President of the U. P. C. C., cast a gloom over the Congress Session at Karachi. Gandhiji succeeded in toning down the enthusiasm of the delegates by emphasising that there is a limit to suffering and that "the way of violence cannot bring Swaraj, but only disaster." The Congress swallowed the pact and consoled itself with a resolution on the Fundamental Rights and Duties defining Swaraj to the masses. Gandhiji agreed to go to London as the sole representative of the Congress to participate in the Round Table Conference.

The change in the Viceroyalty on 18th April was, however, not a pleasant beginning towards the Congress participation. Lord Willingdon, the new Viceroy, could not appreciate the intimacy with which the pact had been concluded. The official attitude stiffened and the Congress soon complained against breaches of the settlement. What really vexed Gandhiji was the refusal of the Viceroy to nominate Dr. Ansari, representing the Nationalist Muslim party to the R.T.C. Lord Irwin had promised to send him along with Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. After an interview with the Viceroy, Gandhiji agreed to sail on 29th August, 1931.

THE SECOND R.T.C. :—

When Gandhiji reached England he found the Conference in a different setting. On August 16, 1931, MacDonald's Labour

Cabinet resigned, and he formed a new 'National Government, dominated by the conservatives. He was still the Chairman of the R.T.C., but at the India Office Mr. Wedgewood-Benn was replaced by Sir Samuel Hoare, a Tory die-hard. In the month of October, England was in the frenzy of election campaigns which returned 470 members to the House of commons. The R.T.C. now under Sir Samuel Hoare in 1931 (Sept. 7—Dec. 1,) became "the tiresome legacy of a pompous debating society". Dr. Zacharias makes the following comments on it :

*"The spectacle the Conference presented to the English on-looker was indeed pitiful. On the one hand he saw the figure of a prophet, proclaiming lofty ideals which seemed either humanly unattainable or atleast far removed from the immediately practicable. On the other, a crowd of cynic self-seekers, who, whether Princes or communalists, clamoured each for his own order or community, his own vested interests, his own ascendancy over others, his own selfish and immediate gains."*⁹

Why did the Congress attend the second and not the first session, when the 'slate was clean'—was the question often discussed in British circles. Gandhiji possibly hoped that his presence could be of immense value in solving the communal issue which was agitating the minds of the two communities. He spared no effort to reconcile their conflicting claims. The problem of representation of the two communities was very complicated as far as the provinces of Bengal and the Punjab were concerned. Here the Muslims were a numerical majority though the economic power lay mostly with the Hindus. The existence of third parties in both the Provinces in large number—the Europeans in Bengal and the Sikhs in the Punjab further complicated the issue. Gandhiji, however, refused to form a strong independent bloc to offer resistance to the Princes and the communalists. The opposition of the Hindu leaders like Malaviya also restrained him from conceding to the Muslims what they expected from the British Government. The problem of the Depressed Classes was presented in a brilliant manner by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, who would

not like them to vote with the caste-Hindus and to be included within the fold of the Hindu community. He was, however, prepared not to press these demands to extremity in case the Hindus were ready to set aside for the Depressed classes a fair part from their representation. What the Hindu leaders failed to do then, that they had to do later. The second session devoted most of its time to the solution of the communal problem—the problem of representation of the different communities in the legislatures. The representatives of the Muslims, the Depressed classes, the Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians, and the British community resident in India ultimately combined against the nationalist elements and demanded separate electorates. "It is with deep sorrow and deeper humiliation," confessed Mahatmaji, "that I have to announce utter failure to secure an agreed solution of the communal question." He suggested that the communal dispute be settled by a judicial tribunal after the constitution-making was over. The main work of the second R. T. C. may be stated as follows :

- (1) The structure of the federal judiciary was completed.
- (2) The distribution of financial resources between the Centre and the Provinces was examined.
- (3) The composition of the federal legislature settled.
- (4) The mode of States' accession to Federation settled.

The second conference, its "long, slow agony", as Mahatmaji said, ended on December 1, 1931. It was, however, not a dull and monotonous session altogether and was marked by animated discussions and speeches. Mahatma Gandhi's method, "persuasive, pleading, arguing, never declamatory" was most impressive. There was Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, called "a poetess, politician, walking encyclopædia on every one's affairs, combining the shrewdness of her years with the vivacity of a young girl," who convulsed her audience by her pungent rhetoric. When a certain delegate had "bored his colleagues almost beyond endurance" by a long lecture in favour of second chambers, she asked, "why only second chambers." "She was", she said, "in favour of third, or lethal, chambers for certain politicians."¹⁰ There was Malaviya, the silver-tongued orator, the vigorous champion of Hindu interests.

Mention must be made about Srinivasa Shastri, the Nestor of Indian liberalism, whose speech at the final plenary sitting has been spoken of "among the great oratorical efforts of mankind."¹¹ The final speech of the Mahatma created a sensation in British circles. He proposed a vote of thanks to the President and said that he would carefully study the declaration crossing all the T's and dotting all the I's, but if he came to the conclusion, as it was somewhat likely, that they had come to a parting of the ways, it would not matter and the Prime Minister would still be entitled to a hearty vote of thanks.

Gandhiji left London on Dec. 6 and met Romain Rolland and Mussolini on the way back. While he was at Rome, the London 'Times' published an alarming report about an interview which he was stated to have given to Signor Gayda of an Italian paper. It said that the second R. T. C. marked a definite rupture of relations between India and England and that the Mahatma was going to renew the struggle. The Mahatma had not seen even the face of the reporter. He reached Bombay on Dec. 28, and when the New Year began, he found himself once again a state-prisoner in Poona jail on January 4, 1932. The Messiah of non-violence, the liberator of the Indian people, was now a broken angel of goodwill and peace. In India also there was a wild rumour that he would direct Satyagraha again and Wellington deprived him of his liberty to lead the movement.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND TORY TERRORISM (1932—34) :—

The arrest of the Mahatma was the signal for the renewal of the conflict. It served him well and strengthened his hold over the Congress. His compromising attitude did not find favour with the extremist group but now he was the embodiment of national resistance. The Tory government thought that time was opportune to strike at the people when their enthusiasm was at a low ebb owing to the conclusion of the pact. It was also worried about the Lancashire trade which had suffered in the previous year and was now threatened with extinction. It was uneasy owing to the fear of communist inspired labour and peasant revolts.

As the movement progressed, the government organised a veritable reign of terror. Leaders and prominent workers of the

11. Zetland : Steps towards Indian Home Rule, p. 90.

Congress were sentenced to long term imprisonments. The Congress organisation was proscribed and its funds, papers, buildings were confiscated. The new ordinances vested the Executive with extraordinary powers and people could be put in prison on mere suspicion. The press was completely gagged and no news could be published about the Congress. Fiendish hordes of the police and the army were quartered here and there and almost everywhere to practise torture on the civilian population. Whole villages and districts were abandoned to the rapacity of local tyrants realizing fantastic collective fines. The deportation of political suspects to the Andamans became a normal traffic.

The British government was determined to break the spirit of the nation by its policy of frightfulness. But what the country resented was the collaboration of the League leaders with the bureaucracy. At Bombay, Maulana Shaukat Ali challenged the boycott movement and provoked Hindu-Muslim riot in May 1932. The riot started on May 14, and for weeks the city was victimized by notorious elements and the authorities rejoiced at the plight of peaceful citizens. The depressed classes were also incited to go the Muslim way.

MACDONALD'S AWARD AND POONA PACT :—

For failure of the Indian delegates to settle the communal question at the second R. T. C. among themselves, Mr. MacDonald offered to arbitrate and his award was published on Aug. 8, 1932. It retained separate electorates for the minority communities and also for the Muslims in Bengal and the Punjab. Special weightage was granted to the Muslims in the provinces, in which they were a minority as also to the Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab. It recognised the Depressed Classes as a minority and gave them separate representation and electorate. The heart of the Mahatma began to sink at the very thought of the dismemberment of the Hindu community artfully planned by British Imperialism. After receiving a disappointing note from the author of the award, he announced his decision to fast unto death. He commenced his fast on Sept. 20, and the entire Hindu community was agitated. At the R. T. C. he had tried to vindicate the solidarity of the community and now he pledged his life for it. He had declared at the Minorities Committee :

*"We do not want the untouchables to be classified as a separate class. The Sikhs may remain such in perpetuity. So may the Muslims and Europeans. Will the untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity? I would far rather that Hinduism died than untouchability lived."*¹²

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya organised a conference of prominent Hindu leaders including Dr. Ambedkar, M. C. Rajah, Birla, Rajendra Prasad, Rajaji. They held consultations from 19th to 24th September at Poona while Gandhiji was fasting under the mango tree in the Yerbada Jail. They were inspired to find a solution to save his life. Dr. Ambedkar was anxious to strike a better bargain as he was not happy on the Premier's Award. This award had granted insignificant representation to the Depressed classes in the Provincial legislatures and nothing at all in the Punjab. The Poona pact between the caste-Hindus and the Depressed classes gave much more to the latter than demanded by him at the R. T. C. The main points of the pact were :

- (1) 148 seats were to be allotted to the Depressed classes in the Provincial Legislatures as against 71 allowed by the official award.
- (2) A percentage of the seats in the Central Legislature, allotted to the general non-Muslim electorate to be reserved for the Depressed classes.
- (3) Voting on the basis of joint electorate. It was to be preceded by a primary election for a panel of four representatives for each reserved seat.
- (4) The system of reserved seats and primary election to be terminated after ten years.
- (5) Adequate representation to the Depressed classes in Public Services.

The pact was accepted by the Government displacing the provisions of the Communal Award relating to the Depressed classes as desired by Gandhiji. It gave stimulus to the movement of untouchability and many temples famous for Hindu devotion were thrown open to the Harijans. The All-India Anti-Untouchability League and the Harijan Seva Sangh were organised to carry on the struggle against untouchability.

WITHDRAWAL OF THE MOVEMENT :—

With Gandhiji's untouchability campaign, the Civil Disobedience Movement grew slack. While the third R. T. C. with its numerous committees composed of loyalists and reactionaries was sitting in London in 1932 and political prisoners were being whipped inside the prisons, the movement was slowly dying out. But it continued till the release of Gandhiji on May 8, 1933 in connection with his "self-purificatory fast of twenty-one days" for the Harijan cause. The Government released him "in view of the nature of the object of the fast and the attitude of mind which it disclosed." He issued a statement recommending the suspension of the movement for six weeks, as fear had seized the common man. The ordinances had cowed him down and secret methods of violence were contributing to his demoralisation. In a message from Vienna, Subhas Bose said that the suspension of Civil Disobedience was a confession of failure, and that Gandhiji had failed as a political leader. The mass civil disobedience was suspended but individual civil disobedience was retained as a matter of national prestige. It was in force from August, 1933 to March, 1934. There was, however, demoralisation and disillusionment in the nationalist ranks and the programme in favour of Council-entry was finding favour. At a meeting of Congress-men at Delhi under the Chairmanship of Dr. Ansari on 31st March, 1933, it was decided to revive the all-India Swaraj Party to enable Congressmen not offering individual civil disobedience to organise the electorate and take part in the elections under the new constitution. The Council-entry programme was considered necessary to end the political stalemate, to secure the repeal of repressive laws and the new reforms. Gandhiji blessed the move and said that he alone was to be in the field to offer civil resistance. The movement was withdrawn in 1934 and on 28th October, Gandhiji announced his intention to retire from the Congress. He even ceased to be its four-anna member later. Babu Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Bombay Session 1934, delivered an academic discourse on the soundness of Satyagrah, a unique weapon of struggle, generating dynamic, non-violent mass action. It met with temporary set-backs "but it knows no defeat." The Congress congratulated the nation on its heroic sacrifices and recorded

that "without non-violent non-cooperation and civil resistance there would never have been the phenomenal mass awakening that has taken place throughout the country." The programme of Council-entry was approved and those Congress-men who were to devote their energies to the constructive programme were "to learn the art and beauty of self-denial and voluntary poverty." They were to engage themselves in nation-building activities, "the spread of khaddar through personal hand-spinning and weaving, the spread of communal unity of hearts by irreproachable personal conduct towards one another in every walk of life, the banishing of untouchability in every shape or form in ones own person, the spread of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks and drugs by personal contact with individual addicts and generally by cultivating personal purity."¹³

REACTIONS:—

Bold spirits in the Congress were unhappy and bewildered at the Gandhian technique. They could not appreciate the loftiness of Gandhiji's ideals, the intense spirituality of his politics and the mystery of his moves. Pandit Nehru was released from prison in 1933 and his writings of this period express his indignation at the programme of the Congress. He passionately pleaded for the ending of exploitation, class-privileges and vested interests. He was put in prison again after four months in January 1934 in connection with some of his speeches at Calcutta considered seditious by the government. K. F. Nariman, who was a member of the Congress Working Committee, after his release came out with a strong indictment of the Congress High Command. He asked :

"How can we induce Gandhiji to rid himself of this almost incorrigible habit.....this perpetual blundering, blending of religion and politics ?"

At this time, he remembered Pandit Motilalji who had joined the choir invisible after a heroic struggle for freedom, and whose death was an irreparable loss to the nation. He said that the nation needed a political task-master of his calibre—"a plain-speaking outspoken giant and not lip-sealed mummies who always shake their heads like spring dolls, perpendicularly or

13. Pattabhi, Vol. I p. 570, See also Ch. III. Part V for other references not marked under this headline.

horizontally, according as the Mahatma pulls the strings straight or sideways."¹⁴ The Socialist and Communist elements were equally vehement in their denunciations.

The Communal Award was a bitter pill to Indian nationalism. The attitude of Mahatmaji towards it was indefinite and the Congress neither accepted it nor rejected it. Bose writes in this connection.

*"Pandit M.M. Malaviya and Mr. M.S. Aney held that the Communal Award, like the White Paper, should be strongly condemned. The rest of the Working Committee under the influence of the Moslem members, maintained that the Congress should "neither accept nor reject" the Communal Award, though they admitted that the Award was thoroughly obnoxious. Why the Moslem leaders in the Congress have taken up this attitude, it's difficult to say—especially when one remembers that after the Karachi Congress, it was they, who by their firm attitude, prevented the Mahatma from yielding to the demand of the communalist Moslems for separate electorate. Whatever the reason may be, the fact remains that to-day they are holding a pistol at the Working Committee—and because of their insistence, the committee has been forced to take up this ridiculous attitude of neither accepting nor rejecting the Award"*¹⁵

There was a storm of controversy over the Communal Award. Muslim opinion favoured it and Hindu opinion was deadly set against it. To the Bengali Hindus it was a horrible spectre of hell. They were especially hard hit in the matter of representation. It allotted to them only 80 seats out of 250 in the new legislature as against 119 to the Muslims. They had to lose twenty seats more to the Depressed Classes as the result of the Poona Pact. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Communal Award caused a split in the Congress. Mr. Aney and Malaviya resigned from the Congress Working Committee and formed the Congress Nationalist Party to fight it out. So far as the Congress High Command is concerned, it had veritably landed itself in an impasse by abandoning the fight. A policy of boycott

14. Bose : The Indian Struggle p. 368.

15. Ibid p. 372.

of the legislatures could possibly alone help the country at this stage. The problem of replacing the award was certainly very difficult in the prevailing state of Hindu-Muslim excitement. But there was nothing to lose by following a policy of non-violent non-cooperation.

PARLIAMENTARISM (1935-38) :—

His Majesty's Government published in March 1933 the White Paper on Reforms indicating the main lines of future constitutional development. It was characterized by Srinivasa Shastri, a liberal politician, as a "hideous grinning anthropoid",¹⁶ and all shades of public opinion condemned it. It was considered by a Joint Parliamentary Committee of both the Houses. Its report was passed by the Parliament in the summer of 1935, and the Government of India Act 1935 received royal assent on Aug. 4th, 1935. Its main features are as follows :

1. Provincial Autonomy. Liberation of the Provinces from Central control except for certain purposes.
2. Full responsible government, subject to safeguards, in all Provinces numbering eleven including Sind and Orissa.
3. Establishment of the Federation of India, comprising both Provinces and States, with a Federal Central Government and Legislature for the management of Central subjects.
4. Dyarchy abolished in the provinces reproduced at the Centre. Foreign Affairs and Defence were reserved to the control of the Governor-General. The subjects transferred to the Ministers were subject to safeguards.
5. Provincial election to the lower Central Legislature.
6. Distribution of seats on the lines of the Communal Award.
7. The Federation not to operate until a specified number of States representing half of the population of Indian States had acceded to it.

Sir Samuel Hoare, moving the second reading of the Government of India Bill in the House of Commons, said that Dominion Status was the ultimate goal of British policy in India. The time during

which the Act was to continue in force was stated as the 'interim' period of transition from partial self-government to complete independence. During the interim period, the 'safeguards' were considered necessary in the interests of peace and tranquility of India and for the protection of minority rights. The 'safeguards' and 'special responsibilities' in the 1935 Act retained the Imperial dome intact. The only redeeming feature of the Act was that it enlarged the Provincial electorate from about $5\frac{1}{2}$ millions in 1919 to 30 millions. It also painted Swaraj to the provincial legislatures in things that matter—the problems of health, education and economic well-being.

The 'Right' wing of the Congress was keen on assuming executive power but the left wing led by Nehru and Bose was against office-acceptance. The Socialists and the Communists, now an energetic, organised, and vocal section, followed them and were even keen on the continuance of struggle. Pandit Nehru was released in Sept. 1935 from the Almora Jail, following a cable received by the Viceroy that Mrs. Nehru was seriously ill in a sanatorium in Germany. He pleaded for vigorous constructive work for national welfare. On his return from Europe with the ashes of his wife, he presided over the Congress session of 1936. He sounded a note of warning to those who had their eye on office—"We cannot rest for rest is betrayal of the cause we have espoused, the pledge we have taken, it is the betrayal of millions who never rest." To Bose, the policy of acceptance of office was a complete defeat and surrender. The Socialists under Jay Prakash and Acharya Narendra Deo staged many walk-outs from the Congress meetings. They even resigned their seats from the A. I. C. C. in protest of the drift towards office-acceptance inside the Congress. But the Rightists, Rajaji, Vallabhbhai Patel, Bhulabhai Desai, Rajendra Prasad etc. backed by Mahatma Gandhi were too strong for them. The Mahatma was the virtual dictator of the Congress, the power behind the throne. He reconciled the two wings and the Congress took part in the elections. It secured absolute majorities in the Provinces of Madras, the U. P., the C. P. and Berar, Bihar, and Orissa. It was the single largest party in four, Bombay, Bengal, Assam and the North-West Frontier Province. It was a negligible minority in the Punjab and Sind. The election campaigns of the leaders revived the

faith and confidence of the masses in the Congress and shattered the fond hopes of reactionaries that Indian nationalism was a spent bullet. Lord Linlithgo's statement of June 1937 was conciliatory in tone and promised cooperation with the Congress. In July 1937, the Congress decided to run the administration directly under it in six provinces and with coalitions in two, and "the quondam outlaw assumed the reins of His Majesty's Government." The Federal scheme contemplating Dyarchy at the centre bristled with many difficulties and could not be put into force.

The national struggle throughout 1930-34 was a virtual state of war between Indian patriotism and British Imperialism. It revealed the intensity of anti-British feeling among the middle-classes and the masses who were ready for suffering and sacrifice for Swaraj. Mahatma Gandhi, "a chivalrous lover of truth and non-violence," whose personality was a "spiritual alchemy", fusing "the old with the new, the medieval with the modern", came to be looked upon by the masses as an *Avatar*. The British Government was impressed by his extraordinary power to move men and foreigners compared him to Lenin. C. F. Andrews writes :

*"The one remarkable likeness between them lies in their volcanic energy of personality surging up from the very depths of their nature with ever new creative urge. They have both been able to fashion millions of human lives according to their will."*¹⁷

He was undoubtedly the most effective leader of opposition the Government of India ever had. Under his leadership India attained the age of her political discretion. It must, however, be emphasised that the Congress decision to accept office was not a happy bargain with Imperialism. It encouraged an ugly scramble for power and consolidated the communal front. It gave the Muslim Communalists a golden opportunity to develop the myth of Hindu atrocity campaign and excite the passions of the Muslim masses. The years 1931-38 constitute a fateful period of modern Indian history. It is to this period that we must turn for an explanation of the later political developments culminating in the partition of the country.

CHAPTER XIII

INDIA AND WORLD WAR II (1939-45).

The Congress Presidential Election Controversy—The Congress stand in regard to World War II—The Cripps' Mission—The August Movement and After—The Congress and the Axis Powers—Bose and the I. N. A.—The Position towards the close of the War.

THE ELECTION CONTROVERSY :—

During the years 1938-39, the Congress was divided into two camps with different ideas on struggle. The Rightists led by ^{J.} Rajaji and Vallabhbhai Patel were devoted to the Gandhian cult and were not prepared to organise the forces of national life for the overthrow of British Imperialism. They were diffident about the endurance of the people in resisting British militarism. They were not averse to a struggle but they counselled patience as they did not appreciate the idea of taking any step which prejudiced England's stand against Fascism. They were prepared for a compromise with Britain in case it could be had with honour. They believed that in international politics she upheld the cause of democracy. Subhas Chandra Bose, the leader of the Leftists, condemned them for their reformist and compromising outlook. As the President of the Congress in 1938, he stated with authority that war was imminent and that Britain was to be involved in difficulties. According to him time was propitious for an all-out national resistance against Imperialism. He was in favour of exploiting labour and peasant discontent for wresting power from England. In his view, the interests of Indian nationalism dictated a bold defiant attitude towards foreign rule. He was not worried by the clash of 'isms' outside. He was even prepared to try violence if it was necessary. The Socialists and the Communists stood by him in his crusade against Gandhism.

G. Adhikari, a prominent Communist worker wrote that Gandhiji's line was "the line of the cowardly and compromising bourgeoisie," while Imperialist repression was decimating the revolutionary vanguard. The Rightists were hostile to the idea of seeking independence "out of Britain's ruin" and did not favour the issue of an ultimatum to England to concede Swaraj. These controversies made the election of the Congress President for the Tripuri session of 1939 very much exciting.

Announcing his decision to seek re-election for Presidentship, Subhas Bose said that the progressive elements were pressing him not to retire and that he was eager to serve his country. "In view of the increasing international tension and the prospective fight over Federation," he said, "the new year will be a momentous one in our national history." The members of the Congress Working Committee—Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Shri Rajendra Prasad, Jairamdas Doulatram, J. B. Kriplani, Sankar Rao Deo, Bhulabhai Desai, demanded a unanimous election. They had grave doubts about "the wisdom of the course adopted by him (Bose)." They felt that "it is a sound policy to adhere to the rule of not re-electing the same President except under very exceptional circumstances." Moreover, they pointed out that the President merely symbolised the unity and solidarity of the nation and that the Congress policy was decided by the Working Committee. Bose did not endorse their stand that the Congress President was a figure-head or a constitutional monarch, otherwise he could be nominated by the Working Committee. There was in that case no need of the farce of election. In his opinion, the position of the Congress President was like the President of the U. S. A. who nominates his own cabinet. He resented the attempt of the Rightists at forcing a Rightist President on the Congress. He said :

"It is widely believed that there is a prospect of a compromise on the Federal Scheme (1935 Act) between the Right Wing of the Congress and the British Government during the coming year. Consequently the Right Wing do not want a Leftist President who may be a thorn in the way of a compromise and may put up obstacles in the path of negotiations".

He was prepared to withdraw if a genuine anti-Federationist like Acharya Narendra Deo could be accepted as the President for the year 1939.¹

The Rightists put up Dr. Pattabhi against Subhas Bose and openly canvassed support for him even when they were members of the Working Committee. Dr. Pattabhi was very much reluctant to accept the contest but Mahatma Gandhi was anxious to place the crown of glory on his head. Bose won the election by a majority of 203 votes and in his own home-province, he had a clear majority of 325 votes against his rival. On 31st January, 1939, Gandhiji issued a statement that he was happy at Bose's victory but since he had induced Dr. Pattabhi not to withdraw his name as a candidate, "the defeat is more mine than his."² It set the controversy at rest and the scene shifted to the Narmada bank. The 52nd Session of the Congress was held at Tripuri in the C.P., in March 1939, and here the contest between the two wings was finally settled. The controversies raging in the past few months made a final contest inevitable. It was reminiscent of the trouble at Surat in 1907 and in each similar issues were involved. The Rightist Wing was sure of its grip over the masses and enjoyed the confidence of the moneyed barons of the land. The Leftists could not carry the masses with them, and represented mostly the lower middle class element. They were isolated and had to beat their wings in the void in vain. The atmosphere in which the Tripuri session was to meet was also tricky. Gandhiji's fast unto death over the Rajkot issue hung over it like a dark cloud. The Rajkot issue was fortunately settled peacefully before the session met, but the President fell seriously ill. He had to be taken in an ambulance car from Jubbulpore to Tripuri. His illness prevented him from conducting the session and he could not even deliver his Presidential address. At the regular session, the Gandhites pulled their weight against Bose and frustrated his attempts at securing a favourable Working Committee. They got the verdict of the delegates in favour of the resolution moved by Govind Ballabh Pant that :

"In view of the critical situation that may develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatma

1. Mitra : Indian Annual Register, 1939. Vol I. pp. 314-316.

2. Ibid p. 320.

Gandhi alone can lead the Congress and the country to victory during such a crisis, the Congress regards it as imperative that the Executive Authority of the Congress should command his implicit confidence and requests the President to nominate the Working Committee for the ensuing year in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji."¹³

Pandit Nehru and the Socialists under Jay Prakash Narain refrained from voting. The action of the Rightists in pushing through the Pant resolution at Tripuri was resented all over the country as a conspiracy against Bose. Even Rabindranath Tagore was moved and he said :

*"A suicidal mania seems to be prevalent in our society that takes a peculiar pleasure in sapping the strength of the country by insidious dealings and all this at a time when it should be our duty to justify our existence before the doubting gaze of the world."*¹⁴

3. Mitra, 1939 Vol. I, p. 332. The behaviour of the Bengali delegates at this session was not decent. Their inflated enthusiasm for Bose, who was an All-India leader, did not make a pleasant impression on the delegates of other provinces particularly when an Egyptian delegation was also present. This possibly helped the Rightists in carrying the Pant resolution easily later. When Pandit Nehru tried to address the delegates on M. S. Aney's resolution that the election controversies be postponed for discussion at a future date in view of the alarming state of Bose's health, the Bengali delegates left their seats, came near the dais and continued shouting—Sarat Chandra Bose Ki Jai, Subhas Babu Ki Jai. When Sarat Bose came to the microphone and asked them to stop crying, they went back to their enclosure. Pandit Nehru was not without reasons indignant at the scene. He said . "During all these years, this is the first time I have witnessed such a scene. During more than a quarter of a century.....I do not know how many of you remember such a scene.....This is not democracy. This is goondaism. This is Fascism. This is neither Socialism nor Democracy. (Loud Cheers from all over the amphitheatre.).. ...A lakh of people were waiting and wasting their time for the proceedings to go on, but hardly fifty or hundred people prevented the proceedings.....It would not be possible to fight British Imperialism with the strength of a mob"—referring to the alleged talk about ultimatum of six months. Ibid p 329.

4. Netaji : His Life and Works p. 233.

It was really tragic for Bose that although he could succeed in winning the confidence of his country-men, he failed "to win the confidence of India's greatest man."⁵ He seceded from the Congress and organised the Forward Bloc movement. His revolt discredited the Old Guard of the Congress but it did not launch mass struggle without sounding the British Government on its war-aims.

THE CONGRESS STAND IN REGARD TO WORLD WAR II :—

The war broke out in September, 1939 and India was dragged into it by the Governor-General without consulting even the Central Legislature. Gandhiji did not take serious view of the irresponsible action of the Viceroy and expressed his sympathies with England and France. But the Congress Working Committee, in its statement of 14th September, called upon the British Government to declare its war-aims "in regard to Democracy and Imperialism and the New Order that it envisaged ; in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India to be given effect to in the present." In his message to the London Daily Chronicle, Pandit Nehru said that such a declaration will be able to "make the people of India enthusiastic for a war which was not theirs". The Congress made India's support to England's war-effort conditional on a declaration by her in favour of "the establishment of a free democratic State in India." There was no assuring response from the British Government and the Working Committee called upon the Congress Cabinets to resign. In November 1939, the constitution was suspended in the provinces where the Congress was in power, and the Governors assumed all powers in their hands.

The Congress was, however, not keen on struggle as the events in Europe were disastrous to the Allies. Moreover, the hostility of the Muslim League to the Congress created serious complications. The celebration of the "Day of Deliverance" on December 22, 1939 by the League as a mark of relief from Congress rule in the eight provinces worsened inter-communal relations in the later period. Dr. Latif developed the theme that "Islam and Hinduism stand asunder", and that "the history of the last 1200 years has failed to achieve unity and has witnessed, during these ages, India always divided into Hindu India and Muslim India," The

difficulty of settling the Muslim claims was now utilized by the foreign government as a pretext to deny India freedom. Lord Linlithgo was of opinion that the protection of minorities, the obligations to the Princes, the defence of the British capitalist interests in India, prevented Britain from making a clear declaration of policy. In January, 1940, he just announced the expansion "of the Executive Council of the Governor-General by the inclusion of a small number of political leaders". It did not meet the Congress demand and forced it on the path of non-cooperation.

At the annual session of Ramgarh in April, 1940, the Congress declared that 'nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people of India.' It demanded a Constituent Assembly to frame India's constitution on the basis of independence, democracy and national unity. It appealed to all classes and communities to take part in the civil disobedience struggle which was "for the freedom of the whole nation." The various Congress organisations became Satyagraha Committees and made preparations for civil disobedience. In November, 1940, the Congress started Individual Civil Disobedience and batches of Satyagrahis courted arrest by shouting anti-war slogans. But this purely passive struggle did not shake the complacency of the British Government and died out in 1941.

Meanwhile, Germany's declaration of war against Soviet Russia gave a different turn to the entire struggle. The months following June, 1941, saw numerous and widespread demonstrations of sympathy for Russia and China, victims of Axis aggression. With Japan's entry into the war on 7th December, danger knocked at the very door of India. Pandit Jawaharlal and Rajaji were eager to cooperate with the government in case a responsible National Government could be set up in the country. The Working Committee was also of the opinion that the ethics of non-violence could not serve the country against organised violence of the enemy. At its Bardoli session on 30th December, 1941, it relieved Gandhiji of his leadership of the Congress and expressed its sympathies "with the peoples who are the subjects of aggression and who are fighting for their freedom." It, however, insisted that only "a free and independent India" could undertake the defence of the country and face the storm of the war. Early in 1942, Marshall and Madame Chiang Kai

Shuk also visited India and made a passionate appeal to Britain and India to stand together. The war was also taking a menacing turn to the Allies. The initial gains of Japan were terrific and as Churchill confessed :

*"The violent eruption of Japan in East Asia, the withdrawal of the United States fleet to the American Coast, the sinking of the Prince of Wales and the Repulse, the surrender of Singapore, and many other circumstances left us with no assured means of defending India from an invasion by the Japanese. We had lost command of the Bay of Bengal, and indeed, to a large extent of the Indian Ocean. Whether the provinces of Madras and Bengal would be pillaged and rased by the Japanese at the time seemed to hang in the balance."*⁶

In this emergency, the problem "naturally arose with poignant force how best to rally all the Indian elements to the defence of their native land." Churchill's Government was compelled to make a gesture.

THE CRIPPS' MISSION :—

On March 11, 1942, Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, announced that Sir Stafford Cripps, the Socialist leader and Lord Privy Seal, had volunteered to go to India on a political mission. In the course of his statement to the House of Commons, he promised Dominion Status to India after the War and said :

*"We must remember also that India is one of the bases from which the strongest counter-blows must be struck at the advance of tyranny and aggression."*⁷

By this time Singapore, Java and Burma had fallen under the Japs and the British Press hailed the momentous mission as a dramatic stroke of Churchill "against the tide of savagery from the East." The mission had favourable reception in India. Sir Stafford was well-known to India and he had visited it in 1939. Maulana Azad, the Congress President said that he was happy to welcome him as a friend.

On March 23, Mr. Cripps arrived in India and said that there was no time to lose and no time for long discussions and

6. Mitra : The Indian Annual Register.

7. Pattabhi : History of the Congress, Vol. II, p 313.

that as a member of the War Cabinet and admirer of India, he wanted to make a final political settlement. He commenced his meetings with the representatives of the different political parties from 25th March and on 29th made public announcement of the offer. It aimed at the creation of a new Indian Union, associated with other Dominions by common allegiance to the Crown, equal in status and independent in domestic and external affairs. The steps to be taken in that direction were to be as follows :

- (1) Setting up an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India immediately after the cessation of hostilities.
- (2) Provision for the participation of Indian States in the constitution-making body.
- (3) H. M. G. undertook to accept the constitution so framed subject to the following :
 - (a) the right of a non-acceding province to its present constitutional position. With such provinces, H. M. G. were to agree to a new constitution.
 - (b) signing of a treaty to cover necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands. The treaty to make provision for the protection of racial and religious minorities.
 - (c) no restrictions on the power of the Indian Union to decide its future relationship with the Commonwealth.

For the composition of the Constituent Assembly, the lower houses of the Provincial Legislatures were to constitute a single electoral college. Its numerical strength was to be about one-tenth of the electoral college and different communities were to be represented on the basis of their proportion in the total population. The Indian States were to nominate their representatives in proportion to their population. During the transitional period of the war, the direction of the defence of India was to be in H. M. G's hands as part of "their world-wide effort." Cripps plainly said that the portfolio of defence could not be in Indian hands, "even if all the parties want it." A plebiscite was to be held in the province if its legislative assembly did not decide on its accession to the Union by a majority of 80%. The new constitution, he said, could not be forced "in these trouble-some times," that no state

could be forced to become member of the Union, and the Provinces had the option to go out and claim Self-Government.

Dr. Pattabhi rightly remarks that the Cripps proposals "embodied different items palatable to different tastes."⁸ They conceded two essential demands of the Congress for participation in the war—firstly a declaration of Indian independence, secondly a Constituent Assembly to frame the constitution. To the States and the Muslim majority provinces, they gave the right of non-accession to the Indian Union and the arrangement was intended to appease the League and the princely order. The weaknesses of the British offer were, however, obvious and Cripps' negotiations failed. The plea of disagreements among the diverse elements of national life was put forward for almost a triple division of the country. The Constituent Assembly proposed was unrepresentative in character and made no provision for democratic representation of the people in the States. There was no definite time-limit to the transfer of authority. The offer was made under the exigencies of war, and if the British Government was not desirous of implementing it immediately, there was no need of it. It did not reflect the sincerity of the British to transfer power. The principle of cabinet responsibility at the centre too was not accepted for the transitional period. Gandhiji described the offer as "a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank," and too ridiculous to find acceptance anywhere. The Congress insisted on immediate transfer of power. The Hindu Mahasabha condemned it as it aimed at the "balkanisation of India." The Liberals considered the splitting up of the country as a "travesty of self-determination." The Muslim League was unhappy as it would have nothing short of Pakistan. On April 11, Sir Stafford announced that H.M.G.'s offer to India was withdrawn. In his broadcast to the American people from England, he dwelt on communalism in Indian politics and on the Congress demand which if conceded meant Hindu domination over the Muslims and the Depressed Classes. He revealed that Gandhiji had asked the British to walk out of India, leaving the country in a state of anarchy and had threatened extreme pressure to win freedom. He concluded :

"He may gain a measure of support for mass disobedience but for the sake of India as well as for the cause of the

*United Nations it will be our duty to insist on keeping India as a safe orderly base of our joint operations against the Japanese. Whatever steps are necessary to that end we must take fearlessly."*⁹

This speech was delivered on 27th July, and on 8th August the Congress came out with 'Quit India' resolution. It was a paradox of Gandhism. It asked the British to lose the Empire and win the War, to leave India and gain India. British Toryism did not understand it and was nonplussed over it. Its distrust of and defiance to the national demand compelled the Congress "to utilize all its non-violent strength for the vindication of the political rights and liberty of India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi."

THE AUGUST MOVEMENT AND AFTER :—

Great Britain did not permit the Indian people to feel free and fight against fascism and the Congress took the pledge "to do or die." The stand of the Congress was that a nation in bondage could not fight for the liberty of other peoples and could not feel that the War was to end Imperialist exploitation. It gave a call to the people to venture ahead "no matter what happened to them, whether sink or swim, whether they win or lose." Addressing the A. I. C. C, Mahatma Gandhi said that the struggle was "an open campaign" and that :

"There should be no subterranean activity, Those who undertake underground activities will come to grief."

The Government arrested the leaders on the 9th early morning in Bombay where they had gathered to issue their declaration of war. The sudden arrest of the leaders made people mad with fury and the movement drifted into violent channels. It took about three months for the British armies to suppress it. With the exception of the workers of the Communist Party, who had been released with the entry of Russia into the War, all sections of the Congress participated in the struggle. In certain areas like Midnapore and Satara, where national governments were established after vigorous popular resistance, the struggle continued for about two years. The Socialist Party led by Shri Jay Prakash organised under-ground violent resistance. According to the official estimates, in the few weeks following

the arrests of the leaders, about 250 railway stations were damaged, 500 post-offices and 150 police stations were attacked. The railway communications in Bihar and the eastern parts of the U. P. remained out of order for many weeks. There were labour strikes on large scale. The whole staff of the Tata Iron Steel Works, about 20,000 men, went on strike. They returned to their work only when the management assured them that it would strive for the establishment of a National Government.¹⁰

The Government was fully prepared and determined to break the bone of popular resistance. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee relinquished his charge as a Minister in Bengal. He protested against the heavy collective fines imposed on the Hindus alone without any regard to the real damage caused to government property or prestige.¹¹ The bureaucracy also cooperated with the trading classes to create artificial scarcity of goods and repress ebullitions of popular feeling. In Bengal, where the population was enthusiastic about the Indian National Army fighting on the Burma border, the bureaucracy fully exploited the greediness of manufacturing and trading classes. The Bengal famine of 1943-44 caused by the dishonesty of the government machinery under the League and the immorality of business classes resulted in the deaths of 15 to 20 lakhs of people. The profiteers made a gain of Rs. 150 crores, about Rs. 1000 at the cost of one life.¹²

THE CONGRESS AND THE AXIS POWERS:—

The British Government accused the Mahatma and the Congress of pro-Axis leanings. It was a mischievous propaganda against Indian nationalism, an unscrupulous attempt to lower it in the estimation of British and American people. Before the war, Mahatma Gandhi had addressed a letter to Hitler that if war came it would be Hitler's fault. When Japan entered the war, he wrote strong articles suggesting that a Japanese invasion of India would be an unmitigated evil. He was certainly not in favour of importing British and American forces to meet the Japanese threat. He did not want the British also to remain in

10. See Alexander, H : India Since Cripps, p. 47.

11. See Mookerjee, S. P. : A Phase of the Indian Struggle, p. 65.

12. Sir John Woodhead Report cited by Jawaharlal in his 'Discovery of India', F. N. pp. 606-07.

India as their presence was an encouragement to the Japs to attack India. He wrote :

*"The presence of the British in India is an invitation to Japan to invade India. Their withdrawal removes the bait. Assume, however, that it does not, free India will be better able to cope with the invasion. Unadulterated non-cooperation will then have full sway."*¹³

The nationalist leaders were clearly of the opinion that support to the rising Axis powers was an invitation to a new Imperialist domination lasting for another hundred years. The utterances of Pandit Nehru in this respect were strong and plain. He admired the heroic resistance of the Chinese and the Russians, and the defeat of Japan and Germany was dear to his heart. As he was speaking on the Congress decision to start struggle to a vast audience in Bombay, a Communist worker interrupted him—"It is a people's war." "Go and ask the people", he retorted, 'they don't think so'. It was to be turned into a people's war in India if the Japs were to be resisted.¹⁴

SUBHAS AND THE I. N. A. :—

While the August movement was dying out, the battle of Indian freedom was going on in a different theatre under different leaders with different ideology. When Japan entered the war in December 1941, there were about 60,000 Indian troops clapped into Malaya with American, Australian and British units. The Indian soldiers and officers were very much discontented owing to the discrimination against them in matters of salaries and amenities. They offered half-hearted resistance to the Japs who in a short time over-ran the Far East. Rash Behari Bose, a Bengali revolutionary, leading the life of an exile in Japan, contacted the Japanese war-lords. They agreed to his suggestion for raising an Indian patriotic army from the Indian prisoners of war. Thus was formed the Indian National Army in September 1942 under the command of Indian officers. Many Indian civilians residing in Malaya, Burma, Hongkong, Java, etc. also joined it. Subhas Chandra Bose, who had escaped from his prison-house in January 1941 and proceeded to Germany via Afghanistan, joined the I.N.A. in July 1943. Under his command

13. Alexander, H : India Since Cripps, pp. 24-25.

14. Ibid, p. 39.

the I.N.A, became a magnificent fighting force. We shall reproduce in the words of Netaji the work and aims of the I.N.A. In a broadcast on June 26, 1945, he said :

"This Army carries India's National Flag and its slogans are India's national slogans. This army has its own Indian officers... And, in the field of battle, this army fights under its own Indian commanders.....If one talks of a puppet army, then it is the British Indian Army that should be called a puppet army, because it is fighting Britain's imperialist war under British officers"

He did not feel ashamed in taking the help of the Axis powers. He considered it essential and said :

"Nobody would be more happy than myself if we would achieve India's independence without foreign help of any sort. But I have yet to find one single instance in modern history where an enslaved nation has achieved its liberation without foreign help of some sort. And for enslaved India, it is much more honourable to join hands with enemies of the British Empire than to curry favour with British leaders or political parties. Our whole difficulty is that we do not hate our enemies enough, and our leaders do not teach us to hate India's enemies, though they teach us to hate those whom they regard as the enemies of other nations. Is it not ridiculous for some of our leaders to talk of fighting Fascism abroad, while shaking hands with imperialism at home ?¹⁵

He said that he was not an arm-chair politician who avoids struggle and seeks compromises. He was engaged in a grim struggle and was facing danger every moment of his life. He passionately refuted the charge of certain politicians that by seeking foreign help he was injuring the cause of Indian independence. He asked for the blessings of Mahatmaji, "Father of our Nation," and said that he had gone abroad "on a perilous quest," risking his life and whole future career, not to gamble with the fortunes of his country. "If British politicians have failed to coax or coerce me," said he, "no other politician can succeed in doing so." He could never compromise in the least, "either the honour or the self-respect or the interests of my country." He certainly

had no illusions about the Americans and said :

*"Regarding the war aims of the U. S. A., I may say that the ruling clique at Washington is now dreaming of world domination. This ruling clique and its intellectual exponents, talk openly of the American century. In this ruling clique, there are extremists who go so far as to call Britain the 49th State of the U. S. A."*¹⁶

He was also sure that the World War II hid in its bosom the possibilities of another conflict which would end imperialist domination all over the world. He was, therefore, pained at the Congress compromising politics :

*"I have no doubt that World War No. 3 will break out within ten years of the end of this war, if not earlier, in case all the suppressed nations of the world are not liberated during the course of the present war. India's independence is a settled fact. The only uncertain factor is the time factor. At the worst, it may take a few more years for India to be free. Why then should we be easily discouraged and rush to the Viceroy's House for a compromise ?"*¹⁷

The I. N. A. fought many campaigns for India's liberation in Burma and elsewhere throughout 1942-45 but could not accomplish much. The Allies had tremendous superiority over the Axis powers in men and material in the later phase of the war.

POSITION TOWARDS THE CLOSE OF THE WAR :—

The years 1943-45 were the years of extreme suffering and frustration to the Indian people. Profiteering and black-marketing which thrived under government patronage hit hard the common man. The leaders of the Congress were behind the prison bars and Gandhiji's release about the middle of 1944 did not solve the political deadlock. The War in Europe, however, came to an end in May 1945 and the general elections in England, so long postponed on account of it were to take place in July. The Congress leaders were released in June and a fresh wave of enthusiasm swept over the country. Pandit Nehru complimented the people for their unconquerable spirit and initiative. "The events in Satara, in Bihar, in Midnapore, elsewhere in Bengal and in the United Provinces," he said, "have added a glorious chapter

16. Ibid pp. 327-28.

17. Ibid, pp. 360.

to the history of the people's fight for independence." Sardar Patel said that the Congress was not prepared to alter even a comma of the Quit India Resolution. "Not only that," said he, "the Congress would soon have to say 'Quit Asia' instead of 'Quit India'." They denounced the Communists for their hostility to the movement and their anti-national outlook and expelled them from the Congress. The Congress espoused the cause of the I. N. A. prisoners and sponsored a movement in favour of their release. The trials of some of the commanders of the I. N. A. at the Red Fort, Delhi, had a miraculous effect in creating mass awakening. People were thrilled and inspired when they came to know of the exploits of these fighters of India's freedom. The news of Subhas Bose's death in a plane crash, as he was leaving Singapore after the surrender of Japan on August 15, 1945, was a stunning blow to the country. To India, the thought of Bose, the bravest among her brave sons, was now a thought of emancipation, of inimitable patriotic endeavour and heroism. We may differ from him and the intelligentsia differed from him. But few will deny him the honour of attaining to the highest form of martyrdom which could be within the reach of a patriot. His country still sighs for him and millions of men weep for him. When India knew the tale of his hardships, it rose spontaneously to denounce the government. The Indian fighting forces were also indignant and furious. At the end of the War, the country was undoubtedly full of revolutionary fervour and excitement. England could not afford to antagonise it for ever by driving it to the extremity of armed resistance and rebellion.

CHAPTER XIV

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS (1945-47).

The Simla Conference—The Labour Government and its India Policy—The Cabinet Delegation—Muslim League's Direct Action—London Conference—Failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan—Transfer of Power—Observations on the British decision to quit.

THE SIMLA CONFERENCE :—

With the conclusion of hostilities in Europe, there was no justification whatsoever for the continuance of the old autocratic and bureaucratic rule in India. The Tory bosses too could not afford to be blind to the fire which was smouldering in this country. Moreover, England was drifting towards socialism and power was fast slipping out of their hands. They were uneasy at the growing popularity of the Labour Party, which was proclaiming the wisdom of reconstituting the Empire on a broad basis of freedom and fellowship. Churchill's Government was eager to justify its stand in regard to India and discredit Indian leaders before the British electorate. It was naturally compelled to make another gesture for solving the tangled skein of Indian politics. After consultations with Leopold Amery, the Secretary of State, Lord Wavell, the Viceroy announced new proposals on June 14, 1945 to end the constitutional impasse and to secure greater cooperation of India in the prosecution of the war against Japan. His announcement was on the following lines :

- (1) The purpose of the proposals was "to ease the present political situation and to advance India towards her goal of full self-government."
- (2) His Majesty's Government desired to forward a settlement on the communal issue among the different parties and for that purpose a Conference of Indian leaders was to be convened.

- (3) The immediate object was to consider the steps for the formation of a new Executive Council at the Centre, which would include the main communities and would include equal proportions of Caste-Hindus and Muslims.
- (4) The portfolio of External Affairs was to be placed in charge of an Indian.
- (5) The Governor-General was not to exercise his constitutional power of control "unreasonably."
- (6) H.M.G. were to appoint a British High Commissioner in India as in the Dominions to represent Great Britain's commercial and other interests.

The members of the Congress Working Committee were released on 15th June and the Viceroy announced his decision to hold a Conference at Simla on 25th June of Indian leaders of different political parties. It was to advise him in respect of setting up a new Executive Council with members "more representative of organised political opinion." The following were invited to the Conference :

"Those now holding office as Premier in a Provincial Cabinet; or, for Provinces under Section 93 Government, those who last held the office of Premier. The Leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly; the leaders of the Congress Party and of the Muslim League Party in the Council of State ; also the leaders of the Nationalist Party and of the European group in the Assembly." "Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah as the recognised leaders of the two main political parties." "Mr. Shiva Raj to represent the scheduled classes. Mr. Tara Singh to represent the Sikhs."

The Muslim League, a pampered child of British Imperialism, now endeavoured to strike a hard bargain with the Congress on the one hand and the government on the other. Mr. Bhulabhai Desai, leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party in the Central Assembly, had agreed with Liaquat Ali Khan, the General Secretary of the Muslim League, on Congress-League parity. It was evidently a ludicrous bargain and made the national organisation equal in political weight to the communal body. But it had the blessings of Gandhiji, who was prepared to go even out of his way in conciliating the League to end the deadlock. Mr. Jinnah now propounded his thesis that the

Congress was essentially an organisation of Caste-Hindus and that it must accept this position in any future constitutional structure. He was encouraged by the British Government to make this assertion and Maulana Abdul Kalam, the President of the Congress was not invited to the conference. Gandhiji recorded his protest in emphatic words :

*"... May I then say that there are no caste and casteless Hindus who are at all politically minded. Therefore, the word rings untrue and offensive. Who represent them at your table? Not the Congress which seeks to represent without distinction all Indians who desire and work for independence. Hence the existence of Hindu Mahasabha claiming to represent Hindus as such, I apprehend that even that body will disclaim representing Caste Hindus."*¹

He pointed out to the Viceroy that he had no *locus standi* to attend the Conference as a Congress representative. The Viceroy accepted the rebuff and issued invitation to the Congress President. But the Conference could not evolve any agreement among the major political parties on the composition of the Executive Council and the Viceroy had no mandate to go ahead without the cooperation of the Muslim League. Mr. Jinnah was not willing to consider the proposals for the formation of an Interim Government unless a declaration was made guaranteeing to the Muslims the right of self-determination in accordance with the Lahore resolution. The Viceroy assured him that the interim arrangement did not injure the League stand in regard to Pakistan. Mr Jinnah then wanted equality of Muslim representation with the Hindus and was not prepared to accept one-third representation of his community proposed for the new Executive Council. It was pointed out to him that Hindu-Muslim parity, parity between 25% and 60% parts of the population, was a mockery of democratic representation. As last, he insisted on nominating all the Muslim members to the Council and the Viceroy did not accept this claim as it was opposed by the Congress and Malik Khizr Hayat Khan, the leader of the Punjab Unionist Party. The Viceroy announced the failure of the Conference in solving the constitutional deadlock. He accepted

Mr. Jinnah's right to veto the constitutional progress of the country and created an impression that the Simla Conference was merely a fraud planned by British reactionaries.

THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT :—

With the success of the Labour Party at the elections there was a dramatic change in Indo-British relationship. Prime Minister, Mr. Atlee announced to the House of Commons that India prayed for Labour victory and that her salvation lay in it. He promised to grapple with the Indian problem with courage and honesty. With the capitulation of Japan in August 1945 after the atom-bombing of Nagasaki and Hiro-Shima, England could not afford to sit tight over the Indian question. The Labour Government invited Lord Wavell for consultations and on his return from England, he made the following declaration :

- (1) That elections to the Central and Provincial Legislatures, so long postponed due to war were to be held in the coming winter (1945-46).
- (2) That H. M. G. desired to convene a "constitution making body" after the elections were over.
- (3) That immediately after the elections discussions were to be held with the representatives of Legislative Assemblies in the Provinces to ascertain "Whether the proposals contained in the 1942 declaration (the Cripps Proposals) are acceptable or whether some alternative or modified scheme is preferable."
- (4) That discussions were to be held with the Indian States "with a view to ascertaining in what way they can best take part in the constitution-making body."
- (5) That the British Government were "proceeding to the consideration of the content of the treaty which will require to be concluded between Great Britain and India."

This declaration was received well in the country as it indicated that British Socialism had decided to follow an enlightened policy towards India. In a broadcast to India, Lord Pethick Lawrence, the Secretary of State said that "1946 will be a crucial year in India's history." He made it plain that the British Government had decided to grant India freedom and that after

the elections, the Viceroy was to form an Executive Council having the support of all parties. The result of the elections to the Central and Provincial Assemblies was an overwhelming victory to the Congress, even in the N. W. F. Province where the Muslims were 95% of the population. The Congress formed Ministries in all Provinces excepting Sindh, Punjab, and Bengal. In Sindh and the Punjab, coalition governments were formed with the exclusion of the Muslim League. On 4 December, 1945, the S. O. S. announced the appointment of a Parliamentary Delegation, consisting of Sir Stafford, Mr. A. V. Alexander and himself, to meet Indian leaders and help India in the attainment of independence. On 15th March 1946, the British Prime Minister also made it plain that "We cannot allow a minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority." The year 1946 was consequently full of political activity.

CABINET DELEGATION :—

The Cabinet delegation arrived in India on March 23, 1946. Its task was two-fold ; to negotiate a settlement on the basis of which Indian Constitution could be framed, and setting up a National Interim Government. Its work was made very difficult by the British pledges to the minorities in the past and by the insistence of the League on a separate sovereign Muslim State. At its convention in April, 1946, in New Delhi, the League demanded Pakistan and resolved on Direct Action to have it. "Muslims were not dead nation," said Suhrawardy, "and the resistance would not be by mere words." Ismail Chundrigar of Bombay said that the British had no right to hand over the Muslims to a subject people over whom they had ruled for over 5000 years. Mohammad Ismail declared that the Indian Muslims were in the midst of a Jihad, holy war. Shaukat Hyat Khan was prepared to show a rehearsal of the Muslim martial spirit, if given a chance, even "when the British army is still there." Sir Firoz Khan said that in fighting the Hindu Raj, the "havoc which the Muslims will play will put to shame what Chengiz Khan or Halaku did." The convention passed the following resolution :

"The Muslim nation will never submit to any constitution for a United India and will never participate in any

single constitution-making machinery set up for the purpose."²

It demanded that the zones comprising Bengal and Assam in the North-East and the Punjab, the N. W. Frontier Province, Sindh and Beluchistan in the North-West of India.....where the Muslims are a dominant majority, be constituted into a sovereign State," that "two separate constitution-making bodies be set up by the peoples of Pakistan and Hindustan for the purpose of framing their respective constitutions." The League promised its cooperation in the formation of an Interim Government at the centre only when its main demands were conceded.

At a Press conference at New Delhi on 25th March, the Cabinet Mission explained that they were not committed to any particular views and had come with open minds. In the next week they held conferences with Lord Wavell and the Governors of the provinces. On April 1, they began their meetings with Indian leaders, which continued upto 17th April. During this period they interviewed 472 leaders in 182 sittings. For about one month, the Delegation held conferences with representatives of every section of public opinion in the country. The representatives of the Congress and the League, however, could not agree with regard to the main political decisions. The Mission made an honest attempt at reconciling the two parties and suggested the following scheme as the basis of their further discussion and consideration :

"A Union Government dealing with the following subjects : Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications. There will be two groups of Provinces, the one of the predominantly Hindu provinces and the other of the predominantly Muslim Provinces, dealing with all other subjects which the Provinces in the respective groups desire to be dealt with in common. The Provincial Governments will deal with all other subjects and will have all the residuary sovereign rights".

So far as the Indian states were concerned, it was pointed out that they will take their appropriate place in the above structure on terms to be negotiated with them. A conference was held at Simla from 5th to 11th May to promote an agreement

between the Congress and the League. Maulana Azad, the Congress President, objected to the grouping of provinces and their functioning together with a common executive and legislative machinery. The League brought forward its own scheme of the partition of India.

The Cabinet Delegation was, however, not convinced of the soundness of the proposal for partition. In its opinion, it did not solve the minority problem as in the areas constituting Pakistan, the non-Muslims were to constitute 48·31% of the population. It would, moreover, endanger the defence of the country and impair the efficiency of the fighting forces. They were, therefore, unable to advise the British Government to hand over power to two entirely separate States. On May 16, they announced their solution of a stable and practicable form of constitution for All-India :

1. There should be a Union of India, embracing both British India and the States, which deal with the following subjects: Foreign Affairs, Defence and communications; and should have the powers necessary to raise the finances required for the above subjects.
2. The Union should have an Executive and Legislature constituted from British India and States representatives. Any question raising a major communal issue in the Legislature should require for its decision a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two major communities as well as a majority of all the members present at voting.
3. All subjects other than the union subjects and all residuary powers should vest in the Provinces.
4. The states will retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded to the union.
5. Provinces should be free to form groups with executives and legislatures, and each group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken in common. (There were to be three Groups: Group A—Madras, Bombay, U. P., Bihar, C. P., Orissa. Group B—Punjab, N. W. F. P., Sind. Group C—Bengal, Assam.)
6. The constitution of the Union and of the groups should contain a provision whereby any province could, by a

majority vote of its legislative Assembly, call for a reconsideration of the terms of the constitution after an initial period of 10 years and at 10 yearly intervals thereafter.

For the formation of the Constituent Assembly, to decide the constitution without delay, they suggested the following plan:-

- (a) To allot to each province a total number of seats proportional to its population, roughly in the ratio of one to a million as the nearest substitute for representation by adult suffrage.
- (b) To divide this provincial allocation of seats between the main communities in each province in proportion to their population.
- (c) To provide that the representatives allotted to each community in a Province shall be elected by the members of the community in its Legislative Assembly.³

The members were to be elected by the lower legislatures of the Provinces in British India on proportional representation. The representatives of the States were to be chosen by consultation.

An Interim Government was to be established immediately for the period of the transfer of authority. It was to include representatives of the main political parties. This was the Delegation's blue-print of Indian freedom, characterized by Mahatma Gandhi as "the best document the British Government could have produced in the circumstances." Lord Wavell ap-

3. See Mitra, Indian Annual Register, Vol. I 1946, pp. 222-23

NOTE :

The details of the composition of the Constituent Assembly were as follows :

- (a) "General" (All communities except Muslims and Sikhs).—210 (Madras—45 ; Bombay—17 ; Bihar—31 ; C. P.—16 ; Orissa—9 ; Punjab—8 ; Sind—1 ; Bengal—27 ; Assam—7).
- (b) Muslims—78 ; (Madras—4 ; Bombay—2 ; U. P.—8 ; Bihar—5 ; C. P.—1 ; Punjab—16 ; N. W. F. P.—3 ; Sind—3 ; Bengal—33 ; Assam—3.)
- (c) Sikhs—4 (Punjab).

In addition to these 292, there were to be some more members as follows :

1—Delhi ; 1—Ajmere-Merwar ; 1—British Baluchistan ; 39 member from Indian States.

pealed to the people to cooperate "at the most critical hour of India's history" and ended with the following verse :

*"Thou too, sail on, O Ship of State,
Sail on, O Union, strong and great :
Humanity with all its fears
With all the hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate."*⁴

The Cabinet plan was undoubtedly an honest attempt at balancing Hindu and Muslim interests. It tacitly conceded the two-nation theory of the League and the Hindu majority areas and the Muslim majority areas were to function as separate units under a common Central Government. The grouping of Provinces on communal lines, residuary powers to the Provinces and a weak Centre were the safe-guards to the Muslim community against the myth of Hindu domination. It was also provided that all communal issues were to be decided by the Central Government after securing a majority vote of every community separately. It envisaged a Constituent Assembly to frame the future constitution of the country. The Constituent Assembly, however, could not tamper with the provisions of the plan relating to communal matters without the consent of the majority of both the communities. The Cabinet Delegation's Plan was the nearest approach to a compromise between the Congress which insisted on united and democratic India, and the League which demanded a separate state. Its merits or weaknesses were not fully understood or recognised then. The Congress first rejected it in parts. Pandit Jawaharlal was not happy at the denial of full sovereignty to the Constituent Assembly. The Congress leaders also asked : what was the guarantee against Sections B and C, the Pakistan groupings, from assuming more powers and reducing non-Muslim minorities in those areas to dust. The Muslim League, however, accepted the plan, when Jinnah assured it : "Believe me, this is the first step towards Pakistan." The Congress then accepted it as a working basis but the League rejected it in toto. At the time, it was said that had the Cabinet plan been accepted, it would have perpetuated Hindu-Muslim feud on a much larger scale and India might have become another Israel. After the departure of the Delegation on 29th June, the League resolved on wrecking the entire plan by direct action.

MUSLIM LEAGUE'S DIRECT ACTION :—

At its meeting on July 29, 1946, the League condemned the Congress as "bent upon setting up a Caste-Hindu Raj in India with the connivance of the British", and resolved "that the time has now come for the Muslim nation to resort to direct action to achieve Pakistan." In his speech, Mr. Jinnah said that by this resolution recommending direct action, the League was bidding "good-bye to constitutional methods." The direct action was not to get out of the slavery under the British but against "the contemplated future of Caste-Hindu domination."⁵ The Direct Action day was celebrated on August 16 all over India, but Calcutta, under the League Ministry, was for three days an "inferno of communal madness." The Statesman of Calcutta, a British paper, commented as follows :

"The bloody shambles to which this country's largest city has been reduced is an abounding disgrace, which owing to the Bengal Ministry's pre-eminence as a League-Ministry has inevitably tarnished seriously the All-India reputation of the League itself."

The League gangsterism which began at Calcutta spread to Noakhali, where there was a catastrophic collapse of all moral values. Here, a new type of man, the uncontrollable human beast, held full sway over civilized life in society. Lord Wavell was quite calm and unaffected. The internal situation was deteriorating and the Congress agreed to accept office in the Central Government. On 4th August, Lord Wavell announced the names of the new Executive Council, and the Interim Government of twelve with seven Congress members, took office on September 2. The League held aloof and the competition "in murder and bestiality" between the two communities continued to be a blot on civilized life in the country. Mr. Jinnah deftly pleaded that "there should be exchange of population from areas where majorities were liable to yield to the temptation of murdering their neighbours of the minority communities, of dishonouring their womanhood, of burning their houses and looting their properties." The "Great Calcutta Killing" facilitated the entry of the League in the Interim Government even when it was non-cooperating with the proposed

Constituent Assembly. In the last week of October, the League was allowed by the Viceroy to get into the Interim Government "to get a foot-hold to fight for our cherished goal of Pakistan," as Mr. Jinnah said. The atmosphere in the Central Government became so strained that the Congress threatened to resign twice. Sardar Patel characterized the Wavell-League technique as "an attempt to get the Congress out of the Interim Government." Pandit Nehru, the Vice-President of the Executive Council, plainly expressed his feeling that Lord Wavell, since the entrance of the Muslim League, had been "removing one by one the wheels of the Cabinet coach," and bringing it to a stand-still.

LONDON CONFERENCE :—

By admitting the League inside the Executive Council, without getting a declaration by it in favour of the Cabinet Delegation's plan, Lord Wavell was evidently encouraging the disruptive technique of Muslim Communalists. Mr. Atlee, however, tried to save the Cabinet plan by a last minute attempt, and invited Congress and League leaders to a Conference in London. He plainly wrote to Pandit Nehru that :

"The object of our talks would be to try and ensure a successful meeting of the Constituent Assembly on December 9. There is no intention of abandoning either the decision of the Assembly to meet, or the plan put forward by the Cabinet Delegation. It is our decision to see that this is implemented in full and not to abandon or alter it....."

Still he assured Mr. Jinnah that the Conference would give full consideration to all points of view. Pandit Nehru, Sardar Baldeo Singh, Mr. Jinnah, and Mr. Liaquat Ali had series of conferences with His Majesty's Government from 3rd to 6th December but failed to arrive at an agreement. At the London Conference, Indian nationalism fought its last battle for Indian unity and lost it. On Dec. 6th, 1946, the British Government plainly announced :

"Should the constitution come to be framed by a Constituent Assembly in which a large section of the Indian population had not been represented, His Majesty's Government could not, of course, contemplate as the Congress

has stated they would not contemplate, forcing such a constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country."

This declaration marred the effectiveness of the work of the Constituent Assembly, which opened its session in New Delhi on December 9 and at which all the 74 Muslim League delegates were absent. Meanwhile there was communal flare-up at Calcutta and Hindu-Muslim disturbances broke out in other parts of the country. The Civil Disobedience movement started by the League in the Punjab paralysed the administrative machinery and throughout March-April 1947, the province was oppressed by communal beastility and madness. It was plain that Lord Wavell was a misfit in India and had proved himself incompetent to effect the transfer of power.

TRANSFER OF POWER :—

The ambiguity in British policy was to a great extent responsible for much of rioting and bloodshed in India. On Feb. 20, 1947, the British Government announced its decision "to take necessary steps to effect the transfer of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948." In justification of this decision, the Prime Minister said :

"The present state of uncertainty is fraught with danger and cannot be indefinitely prolonged."

Gandhiji praised Great Britain's decision as "the noblest act of the British nation." But he shrivelled at the possibility of Pakistan and complained that he was a lone voice in India. He remarked :

"It would be a good thing if the British were to go to-day-thirteen months mean mischief to India. I don't question the nobility of the British declaration. I don't question the sincerity of the Viceroy, but facts are facts. And the facts are that India has been trained to look to the British power for everything. The British will have to take the risk of leaving India to chaos or anarchy. If the British weren't here, we would still go through fire, no doubt, but that fire would purify us."

And he continued to believe :

*"Even if the whole of India is in flames, it will not bring Pakistan."*⁸

Lord Mountbatten was sent to India to implement the new policy. He reached New Delhi on March 23, and applied himself sincerely to his work. In the course of his negotiations he was convinced that the League would not cooperate with the Constituent Assembly in framing the constitution of a free and united India. The Congress also agreed to concede Pakistan, provided it was strictly on the population basis. He tore up the Cabinet Plan but compelled Mr. Jinnah to accept a truncated Pakistan. On June 3, he announced that Great Britain contemplated final transfer of power before August 15 and that India was to be divided into two sovereign states. Boundary Commissions were set up to effect the partition of the Punjab and Bengal and Sylhet was taken from Assam to form a part of Eastern Bengal. Paramountcy lapsed to the States and they were left free to negotiate their accession to either Dominion. This was the Atlee plan and it accepted Mr. Jinnah's interpretation of Indian history. Patel and Nehru, who had so long stood by the Mahatma, now stood by Lord Mountbatten. India was divided and it broke the heart of the Mahatma. The India of his toil, the India of his dreams was fast crumbling before his eyes. With the Partition came to an end the Gandhian phase of the national movement.

THE BRITISH DECISION TO QUIT :—

The British decision to quit was indeed an act of foresight and sound statesmanship. Through the ordeal of the World War II, England emerged as a third rate power, broken and bankrupt. As she looked at the world around her, she found American Capitalism and Soviet Communism contesting for supremacy under the Sun and she was nowhere. The face of things in Asia was fast changing and nationalist agitations had aroused the masses from their sleep of centuries. The war also exploded the hoax of the White Man's prestige in the East. It was no more possible to hold India under military rule. In his speech to the House of Lords on February 25, 1947, Lord Pethick Lawrence made the true observation that "British Raj cannot be maintained in its existing basis with adequate efficiency after 1948." The British Government read the meaning of the country-wide demonstrations in support of the I. N. A. and in memory of Netaji. The revolt of the Indian ratings in Feb. 1946 was a clear signal of the danger ahead. Great Britain could hardly

resist national demand for freedom. And there was no economic gain in resisting it. British goods no longer formed a substantial part of India's imports. At the end of the war they amounted to 20%. The European business-houses and interests were fast passing under Indian control and India was now producing not only fine steel but also munitions and chemicals. Great Britain's decision to leave was a more profitable deal. With good-will for itself in India, it has preserved its prestige and economic interests for a longer period. The final transfer of power was however marked by holocaust of blood and terrible scenes of misery. They remind us of the words uttered by Shri Rabindra Nath Tagore three months before his death in 1941 :

"The wheels of fate will some day compel the English to give up their Indian Empire. But what kind of India will they leave behind, what stark misery? When the stream of their century's administration runs dry at last, what a waste of mud and filth will they leave behind them"?

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CHAPTER XV

PAKISTAN A REALITY.

Development of Muslim Politics (1924-38)—The Two-Nation Theory—The movement for Pakistan—Pakistan a Reality.

DEVELOPMENT OF MUSLIM POLITICS 1924-38 :—

In the evolution of Muslim political consciousness, the nationalist tendency failed to combat narrow communal loyalties and separatist political outlook. The uneven development of the Hindu and Muslim sections of the Indian bourgeoisie and the disparity in the economic life of the two communities were an important factor in shaping Muslim political consciousness. Reactionary communal leaders were more successful with the Muslim masses whose lot in the predominantly Hindu environment was slightly better than those of social outcastes. Where they were a substantial majority as in Bengal, Sind, and the Punjab, they were mostly a poor, indebted cultivating class, languishing under the domination of Hindu landlords and creditors. The ignoble strife for jobs and state patronage was another vital element in the Hindu-Muslim conflict. In this connection, Brailsford, writing in 1930, makes the following comments :

"The new fact of our generation in British India, has been the bitter competition between educated Hindoos and Moslems for offices and jobs. The Hindoos have much the higher intellectual tradition, and are usually the wealthier of the two communities : they absorbed European education earlier, more readily and in much larger numbers than the Moslems, and tended for long to monopolise both the learned professions and the public services recruited by examination. Perceiving the advantage which their rivals had won, the Muslims..... now wage a continual struggle to secure the reservation to their co-religionists of public appointments propor-

*tionate to their numbers.....Life, in this atmosphere of jealous competition, is poisoned for these young men from the start.....Religion has acquired a new economic value, and India, while she loses faith, is cursed by the divisions of her decaying creeds."*¹

Mr. Abul Hassan of Dacca, writing about 1931, makes similar observation on the Hindu-Muslim problem :

*'It is the creation of the few selfish, medieval-minded and short-sighted opportunists and place-hunters, who have made politics a hobby and a hunting ground. The psychological basis of the problem is the imaginary fear of injustice, oppression and tyranny of the Hindu majority.'*²

The prospect of England sharing power with India intensified the contest for power between the two communities. The British Government was interested in accentuating rather than softening the communal conflicts. The Minto-Morley Reforms imposed a vote-value on religion and the mischief was accepted in the later constitutional arrangements. British Imperialism found it convenient to exploit the fears and passions of the Muslim community for the fulfilment of its political ends. Muslim separatism derived its full inspiration from the language of British constitutional documents and official pronouncements.

Hindu-Muslim Tension : The growth of Hindu-Muslim tension after the suspension of the first non-cooperation movement, the bloody communal riots throughout 1924-25, energised reactionary elements inside the Muslim League. The tension continued in the later period. During the five years 1923-27, it was estimated that approximately 450 lives were lost and 5000 persons injured in communal riots. From Sept. 1927 to June 1928, there were about 19 serious riots which affected every province excepting Madras. In his speech to the opening session of the Legislative Assembly at Simla on 29th August 1927, Lord Irwin said :

"I am not exaggerating when I say that, during the 17 months that I have been in India, the whole landscape has been overshadowed by the towering clouds of communal ten-

1. Brailsford, H.N. : Rebel India, pp. 174-175.

2. The Gandhi-Irwin Truce and the Muslims pp. 8-10.

*tion, which have repeatedly discharged their thunderbolts, spreading far throughout the land their devastating fire.....In less than 18 months, so far as numbers are available, the toll taken by this bloody strife has been between 250 and 300 killed and over 2500 injured."*³

The Simon Commission : The appointment of the Simon Commission in 1927 provided the Muslim Communalists a favourable opportunity for weighing down the nationalist elements still quite powerful in the League. In 1927, they held a rival session of the League under the Presidentship of Sir Mohammad Shafee and passed Mr. Zafullah Khan's resolution welcoming the Commission. The Shafee League later organised an All-Parties Muslim Conference in which the Muslim League also participated. The Ulema, the religious divines of Islam, were especially hostile to the Motilal Report. Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad in condemning the Report observes :

*"To me it would be an evil day for the Muslim States, when the control of India's foreign policy would fall into the hands of those, who have the intention of hoisting the flag of 'Om' in the Hedjaz, and they would control India's relations with Arabia, Afghanistan and Persia."*⁴

They secured the rejection of the Nehru Report and completed the debacle of the nationalist Muslims who had agreed to cooperate with the Congress. Their main demands may be stated as follows :

1. A Federal Government with complete autonomy and residuary powers to the Provinces so that every community to have full scope for its progress.
2. Special representation as a protection to the minorities against majority.
3. Separate electorate as there was lack of mutual trust between Hindus and Muslims.
4. Extension of Reforms to the N. W. F. Province and Baluchistan.
5. Separation of Sind from the Bombay Presidency.

3. Report, Indian Statutory Commission, Vol. I, p. 28.

4. The Nehru Report and Muslim Rights, p. 171. This book (the Urdu Version) had tremendous sale among the Muslims.

6. Provisions in the constitution safeguarding Muslim rights.
7. The amendment of the constitution by a four-fifth majority of either House of the Central Legislature and by the same majority of the two houses.

The ascendancy of communalists in the League forced the nationalists to organise a separate association, the Nationalist Muslim Party. The British Government now made full effort at fortifying the communalists against the nationalists. In his letter to the Viceroy, Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State wrote as follows:

*"I should advise Simon to see at all stages all people who are not boycotting the Commission, particularly Muslims and Depressed Classes. I should widely advertise all his interviews with representative Muslims. The whole policy is now obvious. It is to terrify the immense Hindu population, by the apprehension that the Commission is being got hold of by the Muslims, and may present a report altogether destructive of the Hindu position....."*⁵

Mr. M.A. Jinnah, who was leading the moderate wing in the League and was losing popularity with his community, now brought forward his famous 14 points at the League Session at Delhi (1929). These points reconciled the different Muslim view-points and formed the basis of their discussions at the Round Table Conference: They are:

- (1) The form of the future constitution should be Federal with residuary powers vested in the Provinces.
- (2) A uniform measure of autonomy to be granted to all Provinces.
- (3) All Legislatures shall contain adequate representation of minorities without reducing the majority of any province to a minority or even equality.
- (4) In the Central Legislature Muslim representation shall not be less than one-third.
- (5) Representation of communal groups to be by separate electorates.
- (6) Any territorial redistribution shall not affect the Muslim majority in the Punjab, Bengal and the N. W. F. Province.

- (7) Full religious liberty shall be guaranteed to all communities.
- (8) No bill or resolution shall be passed if three-fourths of the members of any community in the particular body oppose such a bill as injurious to that community.
- (9) Sind should be separated from the Bombay Presidency.
- (10) Reforms should be introduced in N. W. F. Province and Baluchistan as in other Provinces.
- (11) Provision should be made in the constitution giving the Muslims an adequate share in all the services and in self-governing bodies.
- (12) The Constitution should embody adequate safeguards for the protection and promotion of Muslim culture education, language, religion etc.
- (13) No Cabinet either Central or Provincial should be formed without a proportion of Muslim ministers of atleast one third.
- (14) No change to be made in the constitution by the central legislature except with the concurrence of the States constituting the Indian Federation.

These demands speak for themselves. They were a down-right rejection of the Nehru Report which visualised a strong centre, a unitarian structure of government and joint electorate. The fourteen points of Jinnah were his master-stroke and they did not aim merely at the protection of Muslim rights. They were the beginning of the fight for power in right earnest. They aimed at occupying the vantage-ground held by the British in case they decided to leave India. Some Muslim minds were also dreaming of another Muslim Empire as early as 1930. Mr. Brailsford tells us that :

*"This feud (Hindu-Muslim) has postponed India's liberation by many a year: it is the worst peril which a self-governing India will have to face. I have heard Mohammedans talking openly of the ease with which, from a base in the self-governing Punjab, with the North-West Frontier Province and Sind at its door, they will one day reconquer India."*⁶

The R. T. C.: The Round Table Conferences further encouraged Muslim communalists in their anti-national role. The Muslim delegates under Aga Khan completely allied themselves with the British reactionaries and concluded pacts with the European Association, which was "the stoutest and the most aggressive opponent of Indian freedom."⁷ The British government also foiled the attempts of Hindu and Muslim leaders at concluding an agreement on political issues. In the new constitutional arrangements, it gave the Muslims even more than 32% representation in the Central Legislature, to which the leaders of the two communities had voluntarily agreed at the Unity Conference at Allahabad. At the Third Round Table Conference, Sir Samuel Hoare announced that H. M. G. had decided to grant 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ % representation to Muslims from British India in the Central Legislature. The British government also accepted the Muslim demand to constitute Sindh into a new Governor's Province and provide for it adequate financial aid from the central revenues. In the following years, the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy worked hard at widening the breach between the two communities. It began seriously debating the issue of the creation of a separate Muslim State. As early as 1932, Mr. J. Coatman C. I. E. in his "Years of Destiny-India, 1926-32," hinted at the possibility of a Pakistan :

*"The creation of a strong, united India, including the whole of British India and the Indian States and the borderland in the north-west whose inclusion in India is one of the first and most fundamental conditions of her nation-hood, is, day by day, being made impossible, and in its place it seems there may be brought into being a powerful Mohammedan State in the north and north-west, with its eyes definitely turned away from India, towards the rest of the moslem world of which it forms the fringe, whilst away to the south and east there will be-what? A Hindu India, homogeneous and united? Perhaps!"*⁸

He tells us that the day, the Legislative Assembly decided to boycott the Simon Commission, a fateful step was taken which could "never be withdrawn or retraced." With it

7. Nehru, J : Autobiography, p. 467.

8. See pages 238-239.

*"ended the first round in the great fight for cooperation with the Statutory Commission. It was a fateful choice that the Hindu members of the opposition in the Assembly, aided by a handful of Moslems, made that day, for since then, inspite of the assembly of representatives of all communities and parties at the Round Table Conference, the division of India into two Indias, the India of the Hindus and the India of the minorities has proceeded apace."*⁹

The 1935 Act and After : During the years 1928-32, as the tide of nationalism began to sweep the people under Gandhian leadership and as Wardha became the centre of political gravity, the British government sedulously planned the disruption of the national front. It encouraged the formation of separatist groups on the basis of caste and religious differences and inspired Muslim Communalism to play an increasingly anti-national and reactionary game. The decade following the 1935 Act saw more of distrust between the Congress and the League. Muslim politics now entered a new era of aggressive demands. The Act had conceded all the Muslim demands of effective minority representation and safeguards and it was hoped that the councils of the Muslim League in future would be marked by sobriety and sanity. The Congress acceptance of office in 1937 was, however, a blunder. It gave a rude set-back to progressive forces in the country. When the Congress High Command decided to accept Provincial Autonomy, it got near the Raj only to divide the Raj and ultimately lament the loss of the Raj. "From acceptance of office under no conditions and in no circumstances, to acceptance whenever and however possible," truly says Prof. Humayun Kabir, "the wheel revolved a full circle, but in the mean time a golden opportunity had been lost."¹⁰ Had the Congress remained aloof and given a chance to communalists to let off their steam inside the legislatures, possibly, the complications of the later period may have been avoided. With the acceptance of office and government on party-lines by the Congress, the League was all the more furious and became a very popular organisation. The battle-cry of Pakistan transformed it into an army on the march. It established

9. Ibid p. 195.

10. See Alexander, H. : India Since Cripps p. 56.

its position even in the N. W. F. P., which was a stronghold of the Congress. During 1938 to 1942, it captured 46 seats in 56 Muslim by-elections and the Congress only three.

With the Congress assuming office, the League raised the cry of Hindu Raj and the suppression of the Muslim community. The twenty-seven months of Congress rule were characterized as a monstrous regime of Hindu tyranny. The real grievance was that the Congress did not share power with the communalists in the provinces where it commanded an absolute majority. In the Congress Cabinets, however, the number of nationalist Muslims was far in excess of the proportion of their population. But the point is that the Leaguers and even others criticised the Congress as a totalitarian organisation for its failure to accommodate other political parties. When the Congress resigned from office after the outbreak of the War, the League worked up communal frenzy to a hysteric pitch and observed a day of deliverance. This action of the League blighted all hopes of Congress-League cooperation in the struggle for freedom. It also established the loyalist character of the League leadership. From separate representation, separate electorate, separate provinces, the demand for a separate State based on two nation theory was the logical outcome of the League power-politics and the British policy of divide and rule.

TWO-NATION THEORY :—

During the years 1937-40, when Indian nationalism was debating the issue of Swaraj, Hindu and Muslim Communalists racked their brains over puerile and meaningless controversies. They dragged all sorts of things into the communal puddle. Mr. V.D. Savarkar, the President of the Hindu Mahasabha claimed India as the homeland of the Hindus, altogether a distinct nation, with Hindi, drawing its nourishment from the Sanskrit vocabulary, as their national language. Mr. M. A. Jinnah retorted that the Muslims were a separate nation and that Urdu deserved to be the universal language of India. The Sind Muslim League at its conference in 1938 urged the Muslims to wear khadi and swadeshi cloth manufactured by Muslim weavers, encourage Muslim shop-keepers, and secure employment for their co-religionists. The Mahasabha issued a call to the Hindus to purchase from the Hindu shops only. The League directed the Muslims to be on

their guard against the Hindu "atrocities campaign". It warned them that the Hindus were attempting to foist upon them the Shree lotus, and Bande-Mataram as the national anthem, and Hindi as the national language. Mr. V.D. Savarkar picked up the gauntlet :

"When we will be in a position to retaliate and do retaliate the Muslims will come to their sense in a day."

These controversies nurtured communal nationalisms and prepared the ground for the division of India. With his consummate dialectic ability, Mr. Jinnah elaborated the two-nation theory and demanded a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims. He laid stress on the utter incompatibility of Hindu and Muslim temperaments and Hindu-Muslim cultures. The following extracts from his Presidential address to the 27th League Session at Lahore in 1940, indicate the trend of his thought :

"The problem in India is not of an inter-communal character, but manifestly of an inter-national one, and it must be treated as such.....It is extremely difficult to appreciate why our Hindu friends fail to understand the real nature of Islam and Hinduism. They are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders, and it is only a dream that Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality.....The Hindus and Muslims have different religions, philosophies, social customs, literature. They neither inter-marry nor dine together, and indeed, they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their views on life and of life are different. It is quite clear that Hindus and Muslims derive their inspiration from different sources of history. They have different epics, their heroes are different, and they have different episodes. Very often the hero of one is a foe of the other and, likewise, their victories and defeats overlap. To yoke together two such nations under a single state, one as a numerical minority and the other as a majority, must lead to growing discontent and final destruction of any fabric that may be so built up for the government of such a state."

With this advocacy of separate Muslim nationhood, Mr. Jinnah claimed for the League "the status of complete equality with the Congress". He demanded fifty percent share for the

Muslims in India in the governance of India. He declared the League as "the only authoritative and representative political organisation of the Mussalmans of India." He characterized the Congress as a Hindu organisation and criticised its policies as a denial of Muslim rights of self-determination. He said :

*"If there exists a will to come to a settlement with the Muslim League, then why does not Mr. Gandhi, as I have said more than once, honestly agree that the Congress is a Hindu organisation and that it represents anything but a solid body of Hindus?... Why should not Mr. Gandhi come as a Hindu leader and let me meet him proudly representing the Muslim."*¹¹

THE MOVEMENT FOR PAKISTAN :—

It is generally believed that the idea of a holy Islamic State originated in the fertile brain of Hazrat Iqbal, the poet-philosopher of Pan Islamism. It appealed to the vanity of the Muslim divines, who imagined that the foundation of a purely Muslim State would liberate Islam all over Asia. It was visualised as the base of an Islamic world revolution and the beginning towards the establishment of "a social system whose primary object is to abolish all distinctions of race, colour, tongue and blood, and which preaches universality of the best kind."¹² The idea also appealed to the Muslim reactionaries whose entire politics revolved round safeguards for minority interests and distrust of nationalism. The solidarity of their community, in their opinion, required the establishment of a State, in which they were to be, not a perpetual minority, but a paramount authority.

THE GENESIS OF PAKISTAN :

It was at the Allahabad League Session of 1930, that Sir Mohammad Iqbal spoke for the first time about a separate Muslim homeland. At this session, the number of delegates present did not even complete the full quorum. Dr. Iqbal said :

"I have no hesitation in declaring that, if the principle that the Indian Muslim is entitled to full and free development on the lines of his own culture and tradition in his own Indian homelands is recognised as the basis of

11. Mitra : The Indian Annual Register. 1940, Vol. I pp. 308-311.

12. Raja Rao and Iqbal : Changing India, p. 192.

*a permanent communal settlement, he will be ready to stake his all for the freedom of India.....I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state. Self-Government within the British Empire, or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims at least of North-West India."*¹³

It was a fascinating vision presented to the gaze of Muslim intelligentsia. In 1933, some Muslim students at Cambridge also circulated a pamphlet demanding "Pakstan." India, they said, was not the name of one single country, nor the homeland of a single nation. It was the designation of a state created for the first time in history by the British. They defined 'Pakstan' as meaning the Punjab, North-West or Afghan Province, Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan. They proposed to carve out two additional Muslim States from India, —Bang-i-Islam, consisting of Bengal and Assam, and Usmanistan, consisting of the Muslim State of Hyderabad.

The idea of a separate homeland lingered in the Muslim mind. It was, however, only after 1935 that the Muslim League accepted it as its war-cry. At the elections in 1937, the League captured only 110 seats out of 402 Muslim seats for the eleven provinces. In Bengal, too, it captured only 37 out of 119 and in the Punjab none at all. This failure was a revelation and a matter for serious thought. The eminent brains of the League now tried to reorganise their organisation and put it on a popular basis. They made hectic efforts to consolidate the Muslim front and establish the League as the only authoritative spokesman for Indian Muslims. They dreaded the influence of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru spreading among the Muslim masses. They devised ways to defy his Muslim-mass-contact programme. They condemned all attacks on the Communal Award and rebuked the Indian National Congress as a body of Hindu politicians. In his letter of 20th March 1937, Dr. Iqbal wrote to Mr. M. A. Jinnah, that it was to be made clear to the Hindus "that no political device, however subtle, can make the Indian Muslim lose sight of his cultural entity." He told him that the Muslim masses were getting

conscious of the mischief of Imperialism and were falling under Congress propaganda. He wanted the League to come out with some economic programme promising the solution of their poverty. It was to cultivate their sympathy by promising economic relief. He suggested that the people were to be told that their poverty could be solved only by the enforcement of the law of the Shariat. And that this could be possible only in a free Muslim dominion. He wrote :

*"Don't you think that the time for such a demand has already arrived? Perhaps this is the best reply you can give to the atheistic socialism of Jawaharlal Nehru."*¹⁴

LEAGUE'S ACCEPTANCE OF PAKISTAN :

Mr. Jinnah could now be trusted to carry on the fight to a finish. In October, 1933, the Sindh Provincial Muslim League conference presided over by Mr. Jinnah demanded the division of India, viz Federation of Muslim States. He developed the theme further at the annual session of the All-India Muslim League at Lahore in 1940. According to him, Western Democracy was totally unsuited for India and that its imposition on India was the disease in the body politic. He wanted a constitution which recognised the existence of two nations in India. He asked the British government to scrap the Federal Constitution of 1935 which, under the guise of democracy and parliamentary system, established the rule of the majority community. The Hindu and Muslim communities he was firmly convinced, could never be transformed into a nation. He said :

"What the unitary government of India for 150 years has failed to achieve cannot be realized by the imposition of a central federal government.....The present artificial unity of India dates back only to the British conquest and is maintained by the British bayonet, but the termination of the British regime will be the herald of the entire break-up with the worst disaster that has ever taken place during the last 1000 years to Muslims..... Muslims are a nation according to any definition of a nation, and they must have their homelands, their territory and their State.....We wish our people to develop to the fullest, our spiritual, cultural, economic,

*social and political life in the way that we think best and in consonance with our own ideals and according to the genius of our people.*¹⁵

At its resolution passed on 23rd March, the League demanded that the areas in which the Muslims were in a majority be grouped to constitute "Independent States." The resolution was vague on the scheme of partition. It was left to the British experts to work it out. Muslim intellectuals also produced wonderful and fantastic literature on the subject.

PROJECTS OF PARTITION :

We may here briefly refer to the different projects of the partition of India produced by Muslim brains. Two projects require to be examined at length as they found favour with a substantial section of the Muslim intelligentsia. The one is the Cultural Zones Scheme by Dr. Syed Abdul Latif, and the other Regional Zones Scheme worked out by a 'Punjabi' who would not announce his name. The former was considered by the Working Committee of the Muslim League at its meeting in March 1939. The Working Committee registered vigorous protests against the plan of federation postulated in the 1935 Act. It asked the British Government to consider Dr. Latif's Scheme given in schedule I appended to the resolution. It condemned the 1935 Act on the following grounds :

- (1) It is framed on the assumption that India is a composite nation.
- (2) It virtually aims at establishing the Hindu Raj.
- (3) It reduces the Muslims to the position of helpless minority at the centre and in most of the British provinces.
- (4) It denies to them the opportunity of economic regeneration and of free and independent development on Islamic lines.
- (5) It neutralises the historic importance of the community.
- (6) It helps to intensify and perpetuate the prevailing cultural clashes between the Hindus and the Muslims.

The Muslims League, therefore, demanded the partition of the

15. Mitra : Indian Annual Register, 1940, Vol. I, pp. 302—304. and pp. 309—10.

country into two divisions --the Hindu Zones and the Muslim Zones which might, if they liked, unite into a confederacy.¹⁶

The Cultural Zones Scheme aimed at carving out four entirely homogeneous Muslim homelands. These were to be :

- (1) The North-West Block, comprising the Punjab, Sind, N. W. F. Province.
- (2) The North-East Block, comprising Bengal and Assam.
- (3) The Delhi-Lucknow Block for Muslims of the U. P. and Bihar. The Muslim state of Rampur was to be included in it. It was to be contiguous to (1).
- (4) The Deccan Block for the Muslims below the Vindhya and Satpuras, including the dominion of Hyderabad and Berar, with a narrow strip of territory in the South running down to Kurnool and Cuddaph to the city of Madras.

This scheme swallowed almost half of the Indian sub-continent for a population of ninety millions. The author of the 'Confederacy' scheme gives the following criticism of this scheme :

- (1) It involves exchange of population on such a large scale that will affect atleast 2/3 of the population in India.
- (2) It ignores the fact that India is climatically diversified, and in the event of the exchange of population, the climate of one region may not suit the inhabitants of another.
- (3) Indian revenues cannot bear the costs involved in the exchange.
- (4) It suggests that some British Indian areas and some British subjects inhabiting them may be exchanged with some Indian State areas and State subjects. There is no moral justification, why a people governed by democratic principles should pass under autocratic rule.
- (5) The suggestion of a long strip of the country extending to the port of Madras and a large area around Calcutta, predominantly Hindu tracts, to be included in the Muslim Zones of Hyderabad and Bengal respectively not practicable for Hindu opposition.

- (6) It aims at a complete withdrawal of the Muslim population from Hindu Zones, a factor detrimental to the further spread of Islam.
- (7) If the Muslim North-West Zone is created on the lines of Syed Sahib, canal heads of some important irrigation projects of the Punjab, will be left out in the adjoining Hindu Zone.

The 'Punjabi' concludes that the scheme was neither practicable nor morally justifiable and was in its nature quiet aggressive.¹⁷

The "Confederacy Scheme" proposed a Confederation of Regional Zones. In his introductory remarks, the 'Punjabi' says that the Muslim community, for its cultural and religious ideals, was compelled to pursue separatist politics. But he was not in favour of total separation of different groups. He advocated separation for a higher ideal, a greater unity through disunity, super-determination through self-determination. "The purpose of separation," he writes, "is not division but union, to be achieved by the simplification of the present complicated political situation in which each community is too much in the way of the other's cultural and economic progress."¹⁸ He claimed self-determination as a birth-right of the Muslims. But he did not sympathise with those politicians who had their eye outside India :

"We should also make it clear to those Muslim separatists, who want separation in order to link their destinies with states outside the Indian sub-continent, that in demanding separation we should not be inspired by any such extra-territorial ideals, ambitions or affinity. We should be Separationists-Cum-Confederationists, and if the Hindus disagree with the idea of a Confederacy of a Hindu India, and Muslim India, then we should be simply separatists, demanding secession of our regions from Hindu India without any link between them."

He concludes with a fine sermon :

*"The foreign element amongst us is quite negligible and we are as much sons of the soil as the Hindus are."*¹⁹

17. Confederacy of India, pp. 6-7.

18. Ibid, p. 15.

19. Ibid, p. 17.

He, however, does not believe in the "myth of a single nation." Islamic conception of nationality, in his opinion, is different from the Western or the Hindu Caste concepts. He suggests the splitting up of India into various federations which may combine in a confederation :

- (1) The Indus Region's Federation, with the Punjab minus the Eastern Hindu tracts, Sind, the N. W. F P., Kashmir, Baluchistan as important Federal Units. This area was to contain 82% Muslims, 6% Sikhs and about 8% Hindus.
- (2) The Hindu India Federation—including the U. P., the C. P., Bihar, Hindu portions of Bengal, Assam, Orissa Madras, Bombay and the Indian States other than the Rajasthan and Deccan States. Hindus 83.72%—Muslims 11%.
- (3) The Rajasthan Federation—including the States of Rajputana and Central India. Hindus 86.39%—Muslims 8.09%.
- (4) The Deccan States Federation—including Hyderabad, Mysore, Bastur States. Hindus 85.28%—Muslims 8.99%.
- (5) The Bengal Federation—including the Muslim tracts of Bengal and Goalpara and Sylhet districts of Assam as Provincial Units.

The confederal authority was to be vested in a Viceroy, assisted by a confederal assembly drawn from the various Indian Federations. Foreign Relations, Defence etc. were to be entrusted to the Governor-General of each Federation, and he was to be responsible to the Viceroy. The author of this scheme does not point out how his scheme could solve the Hindu-Muslim problem. The fate of those who were neither Hindus nor Muslims has not also been taken into account. The units of the different confederacy too have been formed on no logical basis. There were other projects also. Asadullah's scheme aimed at giving Northern India to Muslims and Southern India to Hindus. The Aligarh Scheme drafted by University Professors, Syed Zafrul Hasan and Mohammad Afzal Hussain, postulated a Pakistan not only in North-West but in South India also. All these schemes were based on the following assumptions which are to some extent true but the

remedies suggested were disastrous to the welfare of the country as a whole :

- (1) India is not a country but a sub-continent and that the Hindus and Muslims are two different nations.
- (2) Separation is necessary for the emancipation of Muslims from the economic slavery under the Hindus.
- (3) Islamic social democracy has nothing in common with the Caste hierarchy of the Hindus. The influence of medieval and reactionary Hindu environment is a poison to the vitality of Islamic polity and brotherhood.
- (4) The foundation of an independent Muslim State is a prelude to world revolution on Islamic lines.

We may here enquire as to why Indian nationalism was hostile to proposals about partitioning India. The literature of the period discussing this subject is voluminous. We shall just emphasise those facts which are relevant to our discussion in the present context. The two communities were scattered all over India and no scheme of division on religious basis could separate them in a manner as to leave no bitterness behind. It could be carried to its logical end only either after mass conversions or mass exchange of populations on a scale which, at the time, would have precipitated a civil war. Moreover, religion as the basis of partition was a monstrous proposition of self-determinism. If it could be conceded to the Muslims, there was no moral justification in denying it atleast to the Sikhs, the Christians, and the Zoroastrians, if not the Vaishnavas, the Tantrics, the Shavites, the Lingayats, the Jains, the Buddhists and other sectarian groups of Hinduism. Religion does not determine race and race may be taken as the basis for the determination of a nationality. But, in India, Islam as a distinct racial organism disappeared long before. The argument that India was always divided in the past may appear plausible. But there is no political wisdom in accepting the filth of the past. India divided in the past was a warring India, an India without a nationalist consciousness, a weak and decadent India. The splitting of the country was demanded as a solution of the communal problem. It was like inviting a more serious disease than the one which was ordinary and was the result of the stupidity of the patient. Most of the complications of the communal problem were also an outcome of the presence of the

British. These would have automatically disappeared with his departure. Chesterton is right when he says that it always takes three to make a quarrel. So long as a third party, a peace-maker does not intervene, the quarrel between the two parties does not develop to full fury. Then, to solve differences, people must be prepared to adjust differences and that course was not palatable to the League. The economic and political implications of the partition, too, were not without reasons dreaded by Indian nationalism. Partition without a Federal Centre looking after national interests, said Pandit Nehru, "would be a curious way of giving effect to the principle of self-determination." In the long run it may not, possibly, be helpful to the Muslim State also. He writes in this connection :

*"I am reminded of the story of the man who killed his father and mother and then threw himself on the mercy of the Court as an orphan."*²⁰

PAKISTAN A REALITY :—

The Muslim League at its Madras session in 1941 adopted Pakistan as its creed but still left it vague. Some nationalist leaders accepted it and tried to strike an agreement with Mr. Jinnah. Shri Rajagopalachari, taking his cue from the constitution of Soviet Russia, came out with a formula for securing Congress-League cooperation in solving the political deadlock. Mahatma Gandhi, after his release on May 6, 1944, endorsed Rajaji's formula to meet Mr Jinnah's cry—"Divide and Quit." The formula was :

- (1) The Muslim League would endorse the demand for independence and cooperate with the Congress in forming a Provisional Government for the transitional period.
- (2) At the end of the War, a plebiscite of all the inhabitants in the Muslim majority areas in North-West would decide whether or not they would form a separate state.
- (3) In the event of separation, mutual agreements would be made for defence, communications and other essential matters.
- (4) These terms were to be binding only in case of transfer of full power by England.

20. The Discovery of India, p. 645.

Rajaji, a shrewd brain, who is a match to any Western politician in far-sightedness, hoped that Mr. Jinnah would fall in his trap. He was trying to catch the ghost of Pakistan by its beard and give it a terrible shaking. Jinnah would not permit the beard to be touched at all, and refused to allow non Muslims in the Muslim areas to take part in the plebiscite. He claimed self-determination for Muslims alone in their homelands.

In 1946 the League was compelled to state its demand in precise terms for its negotiations with the Cabinet Delegation. It demanded a sovereign Muslim State comprising Bengal and Assam in the North-East and the Punjab, the N.W.F.P., Sind, and Baluchistan in the North-West. Kashmir was to be a part of the Punjab. It was a mammoth Pakistan. With the whole of these provinces under its control, the League could make a successful bid for overlordship over Hindustan. It was, however, plain that something of it, after the demarcation of the Muslim and non-Muslim majority areas, had to be conceded to the League. Without its full cooperation final constitutional settlement was hardly possible. The League was also determined to frighten the Congress into submission. The frenzy and bestiality of perverted communalism, the great killings at Calcutta, Noakhali, Patna, Lahore and other places completely wrecked the plan of a free United India. The British do not also appear to be very much earnest about the Cabinet plan. They were quitting India, evidently, to win India and they divided India to grip India. The only alternative to partition as such was a civil war for which the negotiating parties were certainly not prepared. The Indian Independence Act, passed in July 1947, by the Parliament marked the birth of the two Dominions—Indian Union and Pakistan. It provided for the complete cessation of British control over Indian affairs from August 1947. All powers were vested in the Constituent Assembly in each dominion. The Dominions were given the right to decide whether they chose to stay within the British Commonwealth of Nations. Till the framing of the new constitution, the Government of India Act, 1935, was to remain in force. The Governor-General and the Governors of the Provinces were deprived of their discretionary powers and they were bound to follow the advice of their Ministers. Each Dominion Cabinet was given the power to nominate its Governor-General. The Constituent

Assembly was to perform the functions of the Central Legislatures. The most objectionable feature of the Act was that Paramountcy of the Crown was declared to have lapsed to the States and they were free to join any dominion.

The division of India on communal basis was never endorsed by rational sections of public opinion. It was a game of Muslim Communalists, playing upon the fears and credulity of the masses, for conquest of power. It resulted in whole-sale butcheries of innocent populations and destruction of property on a large scale. The Partition has also left behind a legacy of bitterness and complications which appear to have taken a permanent shape in Indo-Pak relationship. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was very much apprehensive of them and wrote in 1945 :

*"I cannot excuse or forgive the British authorities for the deliberate part they have played in creating disruption in India. All other injuries will pass, but this will continue to plague us for a much longer period."*²¹

With the partition of India vanished the charm and hypnotism of Gandhism. The bullet was the fate of the Mahatma. The Hindu-Muslim antagonism is playing the same disruptive role to-day as in the past. It is feeding reactionary forces of Hindu-dom and Mulladom which will take the country nowhere. These forces are symptoms of a deep disease from which India has suffered long in the past. If they triumph over the forces of progress they will leave society as a dead sea of humanity. This antagonism is also postponing the emancipation of the toiling millions. It is bolstering up the authority of vested interests who find it convenient and to their interest to divert the common man's hunger for bread into communal channels.

CHAPTER XVI

GANDHI AND GANDHISM

The Work of Mahatma Gandhi—The Gandhian School of Political Thought.

Those who saw Mr. Gandhi as a young fashionable student, using bright high silk-top hat, a stiff and starched collar, and a multi-coloured tie, strolling round the Piccadilly Circus Corner in the metropolis of the Empire, could hardly imagine that he would be passing down in history as the symbol of Asia's awakening. He was not a mighty hero of adventurous deeds like those in the Arabian Nights. Nature intended him to be merely an honest, unassuming servant of humanity. People in India loved him as their father. The world admired him as an apostle of Truth and Non violence. From 1919 till his death on Janury, 30th, 1948, at the hands of a Hindu fanatic, he was the brain and voice of Indian Nationalism

Mahatma Gandhi was born on 2nd October, 1869, at Porbandar in an orthodox Vaishnava Vaishya family. This family had given many Prime Ministers to the various states in Kathiawad. When he was of seven years, his father left Porbandar to take up the Dewanship of the Rajkot State. He was married at the tender age of thirteen. In 1887, he matriculated from a school in Ahmedabad. He tells us that he could not shine as a student although he was not a 'dunce.' Soon after, he lost his father. After his matriculation, he was admitted to a college in Bhavanagar but he failed to take keen interest in his studies. He became a problem to his family and it was decided to send him to England to qualify for the Bar. He was in England during 1887-1891 and returned to India after taking the Barrister's degree. He did not find himself completely at home in London and its fashions and frivolities did not attract him much. It was here that he learnt the great lesson of his life, the shield of

his Truth from Surdas's famous hymn—Nirbala Ke Bala Ram (निर्बल के बल राम). He now developed strong religious convictions and was very much influenced by the teachings of Tolstoy and Ruskin. His life also became very simple. His friends could not persuade him even to smoke. He considered it as an abomination leading one to the dominion of the Devil.¹ On his return to India, he tried his hands at the bar but his performance was disappointing. The dull prosaic routine of a lawyer's life did not interest him. He, however, soon got the chance of his life-time and was sent to Africa by one of his clients. Throughout 1893-1914, he was engaged in a heroic struggle on behalf of Indians in South Africa. There he perfected his technique of Satyagraha and applied it successfully against the mania of colour-bar prevalent in that country. To India it was a pioneering experiment of political agitation and it taught India much more than the lectures of its middle-class intellectuals. He also came to be well-known all over the world. He then turned to India. Here, he conducted his first experiment in Champaram, a district in Bihar, in 1917. The peasants at this place were compelled to plant 3/20th of their lands in Indigo for the White Colonists who subjected them to various exactions. The scandal had passed unnoted till then. Mahatma Gandhi, undeterred by official threats, investigated their complaints and secured justice to them. His later career was one of vigorous tussle with Imperialism. Early in 1919-20, he collected an able, devoted team of workers and soon became the dominant spirit of the Congress movement. After the Nagpur session in December, 1920, most of the elderly Congressites, Mrs. Besant, B. C. Pal, M. A. Jinnah etc. left the Congress. About Jinnah, it is said, that he did not like the clumsy, ill-dressed delegates who now gathered in the Congress pandals and disturbed its proceedings by their cries of "Mahatma Gandhi-ki-Jai", "Gandhi Baba-ki-Jai." Shri Subhas Bose writes :

1. My Experiments with Truth. p. 102.

Dr. Johnson, we are told, never smoked but he had high opinion of the influence of smoking. He once declared to Boswell that it was a habit which required "so little exertion, and yet preserved the mind from total vacuity." But Gandhiji thought like Tolstoy that "Tobacco.....was the worst of all intoxicants, in as much as a man addicted to it was tempted to commit crimes which a drunkard never dared to do ; liquor made a man mad, but tobacco clouded his intellect and made him build castles in the air." Ibid.

*"At the Nagpur Congress in December 1920, Mr. M.A. Jinnah, who was till then a Nationalist leader, addressed him as 'Mr. Gandhi', and he was shouted down by thousands of people who insisted that he should address him as 'Mahatma Gandhi'. The asceticism of Gandhiji, his simple life, his vegetarian diet, his adherence to truth and his consequent fearlessness—all combined to give him a halo of saintliness."*²

His reputation stood sky-high in the later period. He was now on his way to take his seat with the great gods of the Hindu pantheon. The Hindu masses came to look upon him as in incarnation of Divinity.

In judging Gandhiji's work it must be kept in mind that he was not the leader of a labour movement or proletarian struggle. He was the mentor of a national movement, which had independence as its objective and which aimed at the unity of all classes and creeds in the national struggle. He could not assume the role of a class leader and ally himself with any vested interests. The Congress as a national body could not patronise class conflict. His foremost task was to inspire the people with the ideal of freedom and create a nation-wide emotion of victory over the forces of Imperialism. He had to lead a people who were a blind, poor, suffering mass, resigned to their miserable fate, with little staying power and energy to resist for long. Under his leadership, the Congress, in spite of its bourgeois ideology, acquired revolutionary character and created wonderful awakening among the masses. Pandit Nehru truly calls him a "beloved slave-driver", and writes how at his call, a "demoralised, backward, and broken up people suddenly straightened their backs and lifted their hands and took part in disciplined joint action, on a country-wide scale." In this respect, Gandhiji was "the greatest revolutionary of recent times in India."³ His strategy of struggle released tremendous mass energy and advanced the country step by step towards the goal of emancipation. The man, whom Mr. Montagu described as a pure visionary, living in the air, shook the foundations of foreign rule.⁴

2. The Indian Struggle, p. 162.

3. Autobiography, p. 255-265.

4. Here is Montagu's description of Gandhiji—written in 1917-18 :

Gandhiji's personality had a peculiar magic and fascination. He was the noblest and saintliest man of his age, with amazing simplicity of life, purity of soul, humanity of heart and keenness of intellect. His life had the moral grandeur of medieval saints and the halo of ancient Vedic seers. He abhorred violence and materialism as contributing to the perversity of human nature. He raised politics to high moral and ethical standards. It is easy to argue against his non-violence as an effective weapon of struggle. But, if it is examined in the context of Indian life and its traditions, its complex structure of classes and sects with mutually hostile interests, it appears to be the only safe and sound political weapon. It is difficult to disagree with Pandit Nehru's comments on the moral and ethical side of his movement :

*"The spiritualisation of politics, using the word not in its narrow religious sense, seemed to me a fine idea. A worthy end should have worthy means leading up to it. That seemed not only a good ethical doctrine but sound practical politics, for the means that are not good often defeat the end in view and raise new problems and difficulties."*⁵

The leadership of Mahatma Gandhi gave a spiritual impulse to the national movement and inspired the fighters of freedom to heights of moral fervour. The non-violent soldiers exposed their lives to severest hardships and the unarmed rebels became a threat to the military machine of the Britisher. His Satyagraha, resistance to brute force by moral force and suffering, transformed the struggle of freedom from a middle class agitation into a mass movement. It gave to the movement a vitality and inspiration which it could otherwise, possibly, not acquire. It created a powerful general will of the nation and directed it into the channel of a blood-less revolution. It was an effective

"Afterwards we saw the renowned Gandhi. He is a social reformer ; he has a real desire to find grievance and to cure them, not for any reasons of self-advertisement but to improve the conditions of his fellow-men. He is the real hero of the settlement of the Indian question in South Africa, where he suffered imprisonment. He had just been helping the Government to find a solution for the grievances of the Indigo labour in Bihar. He dresses like a Coolie, forswears all personal advancement, lives practically in the air, and is a pure visionary." An Indian Diary, p. 58.

challenge to terrorism as a method of political agitation. His stress on non-violence made the masses and the intelligentsia indifferent to violence and saved them from the horrors of another Mutiny. It has been truly said that he was the meeting-ground of ineffectual revolutionaries and dilettante intellectuals. Professor Earnest Barker of the Cambridge University was impressed by Gandhiji as one "who could mix the spiritual with the temporal and could be at the same time true to both."⁶ Writing about his success as a political leader, Edward Thompson observes :

*"He will be remembered as one of the very few who have set the stamp of an idea on an epoch : that idea is non-violence.....its conduct justifies a guarded belief that its outcome may be a sane and civilized relationship (between India and England)."*⁷

Gandhiji was also a great nation-builder. His patriotism implied self-less service to the country and the welfare of the whole people. To him, Swaraj was not merely the end of foreign domination. It was a comprehensive programme of national reconstruction. His constructive programme aimed at the reform and up-building of Indian life in every sphere. The use of Swadeshi goods and the revival of village industries improved the economic condition of the teeming millions who were idle for months and whose life was miserable. The boycott of foreign goods aided the growth of industry on modern lines. The movement for the abolition of untouchability was a campaign against the taboos of caste and sought the adjustment of social relations on the basis of social equality. The lot of the Indian woman was a matter of deep concern to him. He freed her from social bondage and gave her courage to take her full share in the public movements of the day. His plans of education, his crusade against social abuses, drinking and Hindu-Muslim feuds were inspired by a lofty motive of service to the common man. The Congress movement under him became a movement of all-round regeneration of Indian life. It inspired the exploited classes with a sense of solidarity and hope of deliverance and gave them stamina to seek virtue and resist evil.

6. Mahatma Gandhi--Essays and Recollections, by Radhakrishnan, p. 61.

7. Ibid p. 294.

Some tell us that Mahatma Gandhi was not a rationalist. That his ideas on social and economic problems were rooted in orthodox Hindu thinking and that he was incapable of appreciating the beauties of science which has divined the mystery of motion. True, Mahatmaji was not a radical thinker at all. Most of his utterances would suggest a deep longing to return to the barbaric simplicity of life in the woods. But his utterances merely reflect the consciousness of India of his day in which he moved, lived and had his being. It would also not be fair to stretch his views too far. The following extract from his writings would give us a correct view of his approach towards the problems of our age :

*"I have no design against machinery as such. What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. Machinery has its place ; it has come to stay. Organisation of machinery for the purpose of concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few, for the exploitation of the many, I hold to be altogether wrong. Much of the organisation of machinery of the present age is of that type. I would categorically state my conviction that the mania for mass production is responsible for the world crises. The heavy machinery for work of public utility, which cannot be undertaken by human labour, has its inevitable place ; but all that should be owned by the State and used entirely for the benefit of the people. The supreme consideration is Man."*⁸

Mahatma Gandhi's role as a politician is a matter of some controversy. Two observations have been made in this connection which require examination. The first is that the Mahatma would have been a misfit in any other country. The second is that he failed as a political leader or politician. In connection with the first, Pandit Nehru writes :

*"Perhaps in every other country he would be out of place to-day, but India still seems to understand, or atleast appreciate, the prophetic religious type of man, talking of sin and salvation and non-violence."*⁹

8. Prabhu, R. K. : The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi, pp. 119-120.

9. Autobiography, p. 253.

Subhas Babu uses stronger expressions :

*"What for instance, would he have done in a country like Russia or Germany or Italy? His doctrine of non-violence would have led him to the cross or to the mental hospital. In India it is different. His simple life, his vegetarian diet, his goat's milk, his day of silence every week, his habit of squatting on the floor instead of sitting on a chair, his loin-cloth-in fact everything connected with him has marked him as one of the eccentric Mahatmas of old and has brought him nearer to his people."*¹⁰

He thinks that C. R. Das was a superior political genius, who, had Providence spared him, may have blossomed out as another Lenin, or Mussolini, or Hitler.¹¹ Now, this is writing in a vein of hero-worship. The council brand of politicians never make revolutionary leaders. In regard to the Mahatma being a misfit in any other country, it may first be pointed out that he had no ambition to flourish in a foreign climate. Then, comparative studies are not very helpful in historical discussions. A successful leader is one who typifies in himself the mood and temper of his people, the fears and aspirations of his followers. The movements of history are not the creations of individuals. They are a product of the social environment. Those who fit well into that environment assume the leadership of public movements and direct them. The success of their leadership depends not only on their ability but also on the character of those who are led. The Mahatma was an inevitable phenomenon of Indian nationalism in the later phase.

As a political leader, apparently, he failed in the sense that all his shots misfired. He himself confessed that some of his experiments were Himalayan blunders. But he was the first man to give a call for united national effort in an anti-Imperialist struggle. His efforts in Africa and India encouraged revolutionary movements in other parts of Asia. Throughout 1919-47, Indian nationalism looked to him to lead it and show it light. There is also nothing perplexing about his failures. They were dignified retreats and not a capitulation, truces and not a defeat. They followed the correct strategy of struggle—one step backwards, two steps

10. The Indian Struggle, p. 406

11. Ibid. p. 160.

forward. This harasses the enemy more than continuous resistance by the weaker party.

There are some who tell us that the Mahatma was a super-burger masquerading as a politician and a patriot. That he was a strong counter-revolutionary force and worked for the aggrandisement of the bourgeoisie. Some would go to the extent of suggesting that he was a cheat, who cheated his people and cheated his conscience also. If that were so, then Buddha, Jesus Christ, Confucius and numerous other saints and supermen of history are all great cheats and frauds of mankind. All such thinking is judging the past without a proper historical perspective. Mahatma Gandhi will ever remain the pride of Indian nationalism and a unique phenomenon of political history.

THE GANDHIAN SCHOOL OF THOUGHT :—

The nationalist movement in the early phase was dominated by Liberalism or Constitutionalism. In the second phase, the Extremist School or the Nationalist School and the Revolutionary School acquired greater prominence. In the later era, Indian nationalism was dominated by what we may call as Gandhism. It was a synthesis between the two main schools of thought evolved earlier. It harmonised the rationalism of the Liberals with the religious earnestness of the Nationalists and developed further the technique of struggle tried in the period following the partition of Bengal. Nationalism in the Gandhian era differed from the earlier schools in one respect. It did not share with the Liberals their unqualified admiration of the West and had no appreciation of the communal fervour of the Nationalists.

Mahatma Gandhi was not a doctrinaire but was a practical thinker. He was incapable of looking at Indian problems from the Western angle. By temperament he was conservative and religious and had deep admiration of the simplicity and modesty of Indian life. The blind materialism of the West, in his opinion, was disastrous to the country as it exalts profit over virtue, lust over love and strife over harmony. All sons of God, in his opinion, have a right to live, and the welfare of all was the sheet-anchor of his faith. He had profound faith in the essential goodness of human nature. He did not look on the world as a scene of perpetual struggle, full of the harsh and grating strife of tyrants

and foes'. The clash and conflict in this world was, in his opinion, a temporary phase and it can not obstruct the steady march of humanity towards progress and happiness. The people must face the future with confidence.

NON-VIOLENCE-THE LAW OF PROGRESS :—

He did not believe that the universe had commenced with wars, otherwise "not a man would have been found alive to-day." That many men are still alive to-day shows 'that the world is based not on the force of arms, but on the force of truth or love.' According to him, history is a record of the progress of mankind and it points to the victory of soul-force over brute-force. History, he wrote, gives abundant proof of the fact that those who take the sword, perish by the sword but those who resist the sword by spirit and suffering live and flourish. He was inspired by the belief that life is a great and noble calling and, inspite of the interruptions of violence, it is moving towards an elevated and a lofty destiny. The instinct of self-preservation, he said, is stronger than that of self-destruction and the spirit of non-violence is far superior to that of violence. He said :

"Non-Violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical force. The dignity of man requires obedience to higher law—the struggle of the spirit."

And further :

*"Non-violence is a perfect state. It is the goal towards which all mankind moves naturally though unconsciously."*¹²

MEANING OF NON-VIOLENCE :—

In his famous article on the doctrine of the sword written in 1920, he analysed how non-violence is infinitely superior to violence in a struggle against evil. Effective resistance to evil lies not in the exertions of the physical capacity but in resistance by the "indomitable will." The individual must strengthen his will by the practice of non-violence, through suffering and self-sacrifice. Satyagraha and non-cooperation are nothing but names for the law of non-violence which is the law of suffering. Suffering does not imply cowardly submission to the will of the evil-doer but

12. "The Doctrine of the Sword"—Gandhiji's article in 'Young India' dated 14th August, 1920—See: Swaraj And Non-Cooperation, pp.52-56.

resistance by one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. "Working under this law of our being", he wrote, "it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation of that empire's fall or regeneration." Non violence is, however, not possible without full control of the self and purity of soul is necessary for acquiring control over the self. Consequently the individual must renounce contact with impurities and evil things in deed and thought, must practise penance and asceticism and experience suffering. He must atone for the sins of the past. Such a man alone, who has acquired purity of soul, can be a true Satyagrahi and a passive resister. He alone is a gallant and brave soldier and can resist the brute force of the coward with his soul-force. Passive resistance is a struggle, which behoves a dignified and courageous people. He wrote :

"Thus passive resistance, that is, soul-force, is matchless. It is superior to the force of arms. It cannot be considered merely a weapon of the weak. Physical force men are strangers to the courage that is requisite in a passive resister. Do we believe that a coward can ever disobey a law that he dislikes ? But a passive resister will say he will not obey a law that is against his conscience, even though he may be blown to pieces by the mouth of a cannon."

"Wherein is courage required—in blowing others to pieces from behind a cannon or with a smiling face to approach a cannon and to be blown to pieces ? Who is the true warrior—he who keeps death always as a bosom-friend or he who controls the death of others ? Believe me, that a man devoid of courage and manhood can never be a passive resister....."

"Passive resistance is an all-sided sword ; it can be used any how ; it blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used. Without drawing a drop of blood, it produces far reaching results. It never rusts, and cannot be stolen."

Now what does all this mean ? It is Buddha again telling us that our willingness to suffer and die for a noble cause is a proof of our sincerity and attachment to the cause. If we develop

this true sincerity and belief, it shall not take us long to convert the enemy to our cause, to win him by appealing to his moral instincts. Then, the nobility of the cause is enhanced all the more if we pursue noble means to achieve it.

APPLICATION OF NON-VIOLENCE TO POLITICS :—

According to Gandhiji, noble means will alone lead to noble ends. Swaraj acquired through brute force is no Swaraj. The purpose of freedom is not material gain but moral and spiritual welfare of the nation which is not possible under slavery. He, therefore, wanted the nation to concentrate on its spiritual energy, stand on its spiritual strength and win Swaraj through self-purification and *Sadhana*. In this respect, Gandhiji made the political struggle a spiritual movement against tyranny to be conducted by the spirit of the entire nation. Indian nationalism, unlike that of Europe, was freed from hatred and violence and became a symbol of the uplift of humanity. Gandhiji vigorously protested that he would have nothing to do with a struggle which smacked of violence. He had no hatred of the Britisher, and the struggle was not against him but a vicious system with which the nation had to non-cooperate in a non-violent manner. He denounced anarchy as a sign of fear and exhorted the nation to practise the quality of fearlessness which was "the first thing indispensable before we could achieve anything real or permanent." In his opinion, fearlessness is unattainable without religious consciousness. He said :

*"Let us fear God and we shall cease to fear man. If we grasp the fact that there is a divinity within us which witnesses everything we think or do, and which protects us and guides us along the path, it is clear that we shall cease to have any other fear on the face of the earth, save the fear of God."*¹³

In the course of a great speech at the Banaras Hindu University, at which the Viceroy, surrounded by detectives was present, Gandhiji said :

"Why this distrust? Is it not better that even Lord Hardinge should die than live a living death? But a representa-

13. See articles on Gandhiji in the "Twentieth Century"—a monthly magazine published from Allahabad. These extracts are from articles which appeared in the issues of 1935.

tive of a mighty sovereign may not. He might find it necessary even to live a living death."

He preached his followers the great quality of love, love even for those against whom they fought. In his discourses he always emphasised :

"Three-fourths of the miseries and misunderstandings in the world disappear if we step into the shoes of our adversaries and understand their stand-point. We shall then either agree with our adversaries or think charitably of them."

"The force of love is the same as the force of soul or of truth. We have evidence of its working at every step. The universe would disappear without the existence of that force of love."

Gandhiji's conception of struggle was thus very much different from the usual ideas on struggle. The struggle in the plain words was to remain a form of non-violent strike against Imperialism. Even the Leftist elements did not differ from him in this respect. Indian nationalism was keen to maintain the unity of the nationalist front. It was keen to unite all, Hindus and Muslims, the high-castes and the low-castes, the capitalist and the labourer, the land-lord and the peasant. It may, however, be asked that what was the need of so much of moralising and spiritualisation! What has political struggle to do with moral conundrums? Plainly enough, these were inspired by fear itself, — fear present in the mind of the nationalist leadership, fear of violence on both sides, India and England. In the Gandhian thought, the cure of fear in the ultimate analysis is the acceptance of fear—fear of violence and fear of God.

Gandhiji considered violence as futile and harmful to the nationalist cause. Violence in politics, to him, was a form of fraud. He believed that India in her circumstances could not gain her freedom through violence. In 1930, he wrote :

*"It is of course open to the critics to say that both non-violence and Independent India achieved through it exist only in my imagination. My retort then is that, God willing, I shall not be found surviving in an India that remains slave inspite of this struggle, or under so-called independence achieved through violent means."*¹⁴

The application of non-violence to mass movements in an organised manner, in his opinion, was more effective than violent resistance. Hence he elaborated further the old technique of boycott and passive resistance. These take the shape of non-cooperation and civil disobedience. The movement in the latter condition implied breaking the laws, refusal to pay taxes, picketting of the sale of foreign cloth, and all other items which could further the cause of a passive revolt. Repression by the government added to the efficiency of this "organised disobedience." The government was exposed and weakened.

Gandhiji emphasised that the way to Swaraj lay through "self-impression, self-expression and self-reliance, both corporate and individual." It was possible to achieve it through devotion to Swadeshi in its widest meaning and through non-violent non-cooperation with all that polluted the soul of the nation. He fought for a Swaraj which was to be the happiness of the many and not the possession of a few. To Rabindra Nath Tagore, the Bard of Shantiniketan who was a hostile critic of mass civil disobedience, he wrote that Swaraj was more necessary to the masses who were groaning under grinding poverty. He wrote :

"I found it impossible to soothe suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem, invigorating food."

He had little sympathy with the princely or the moneyed classes but violence to them was out of question in his humanitarian philosophy. He, therefore, exhorted the rich to treat their riches as a trust for the people and not as an instrument for their enslavement and exploitation. Swaraj was meaningless to him, if it did not bring happiness for the hungry and spiritually starved millions of his country men.

Gandhiji thus gave Indian nationalism a philosophy of class-harmony, which it needed as its sole preoccupation was the elimination of foreign rule. It is not difficult to point out contradictions in his thought but it served the interests of the nation. His writings and utterances exercised powerful influence on contemporary nationalist thought. With remarkable success, he spiritualised public life and infused it with the quality of fearlessness and service. He taught the Indian nation the doctrine

of self-help in political affairs. He was an uncompromising lover of truth and non-violence but a very tolerant and compromising politician. Forgiveness, almost divine forgiveness, was a prominent trait of his public career. No man of modern history has been so variously described yet universally loved. He was the apostle of Indian freedom, the modern "Jesus Christ", "the founder of His kingdom on Earth", "the embodied symbol of the Indian nation, its living sacrifice and sacrament in one", "the shaker of the foundations of the British Empire", "an image of Buddha with the sense it gives of wisdom and peace", "prophet and politician, saint and super-propagandist; the object of adoration to three quarters of India and of admiration to half the world", "the most formidable man that Asia has thrown up since Mahomed." Only a country like India could have produced such a worthy and noble rebel.

Index

- Abdali, Ahmad Shah, 11.
 Abhinav Bharat, 96.
 Acts of Parliament relating to India :
 Jury Act, 32. Indian Councils Act (1861), 14., Act of 1892, 51, 56. Act of 1909, 111., See also Minto-Morley Reforms., Act of 1919, See Montagu-Chemsford Reforms., Act of 1935., 224-25, 226, 267-68, 274, Indian Independence Act, 1947., 274-75.
 Acts of Government of India :
 State Prisoners Act, 1850, 184., Frontier Outrages Act, 1867, 184., Arms Act, 36., Vernacular Press Act, 36, 38, Legal Practitioners Act, 57., Indian Universities Act (1904), 82, Criminal Law Amendment Act (1908), 98., Newspapers Act (1908), 98., Press Act (1910), 98., Seditious Meetings Act (1911), 98, Crimes Act, 98.
 Adhikari, G., 228.
 Agarkar, Gopal Ganesh, 125.
 Ajodhyanaath, Pandit., 49
 Alexander, A. V., 246.
 Al-Hilal, 113.
 Aligarh Education Movement, 60-61.
 Ali, Maulana Muhammad., 110, 113, 162, 167, 175, 178, 208, 212.
 Ali, Maulana Shaukat, 162, 208.
 Alipore Conspiracy Case, 94.
 All-India Anti-Untouchability League, 220.
 All-India Muslim Education Conference, 61.
 All-India National Liberal Federation, 72, 149, 194, 195, 199-200, 235.
 All-India Spinners Association, 189.
 All Parties Conference, 195, 197.
 Amanullah, Amir of Afghanistan., 157.
 Ambedkar Dr. B. R., 216, 220.
 Amerst, Lieut., 88.
 Amery, L. S., 242.
 Andrews, C. F., 226.
 Aney, M. S., 189, 223.
 Anglo-Muslim Defence Association, 62.
 Announcement of 1917, 146 147, 199.
 Ansari, Dr., 113, 161, 177, 215, 221.
 Anusilan Samiti, 94
 Argyll, the Duke of, 35.
 Archbold, Principal, 109.
 Arundale, G. S., 138.
 Arya Samaj, 23, 60, 84, 127.
 Asadullah, 271.
 Asquith, Lord., 132.
 Attlee, Prime Minister., 245
 August Movement (1942), 9, 236-237.
 Aurangzeb, 11, 82.
 Azad, Maulana Abdul Kalaam., 113, 178, 233, 244, 248.
 Bacon, 83.
 Bajaj, Seth Jamna Lal., 168.
 Bande-Mataram, 116, 129.
 Banerji, Sir Gurudus., 90.
 Bankim Chandra, 84.
 Bannerjea, Sir Surendranath, 17, 34, 37, 39, 41, 51, 52, 53, 56, 61, 63, 66, 68, 70-72, 82, 88, 98, 111, 130, 133, 137, 147, 149, 163, 182.
 Barkatulla, 145.
 Barisal, Provincial Conference, 90.
 Barker, E., 280.
 Basu, Bhupendranath, 114, 134.

- Beck, Principal, 61.
 Beg, Khalil Khalid, 144.
 Behari, Dr. Rash, 58, 63, 90, 103, 104.
 Bengal, Famine 1943-44, 237.
 Bengal, Regulations, 1818, 98, 183, 187.
 Bengalee, 71.
 Benn, Wedgewood, 200, 216.
 Bernhardt, 144.
 Desant, Dr. Annie., 4, 16, 25, 43, 54, 99, 104, 106, 127, 135, 136-37, 147, 148, 154, 163, 164, 165, 277.
 Bhagat Singh, 194, 195, 215.
 Bhandarkar, R. G., 23, 125.
 Bikaner, Maharaja of, 153, 212.
 Bills of Government of India :
 Age of Consent, 125, 11bert, 6, 34, 39., Indian States (Protection Against Disaffection), 174., Official Secrets, 82., Rupee Stabilization (1927), 191.
 Birkenhead, Lord., 188, 192, 195, 200.
 Birla, G. D., 220.
 Blackett, Sir Basil., 191, 193, 194.
 Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna, 24.
 Bombay Association, 33.
 Bombay, Land Alienation Bill, 73.
 Bonnerjea, W. C., 44, 47, 51, 63, 103.
 Bose, Ananda Mohan., 37, 53, 81, 103.
 Bose, Rashbehari, 238.
 Bose, Subhas Chandra, 170, 174, 176, 187, 190, 195, 201, 203, 213, 221, 223, 225, 227-231, 277, 282 ; Bose and the I. N. A., 238-40 ; Death of, 241
 Bradlaugh, 50, 56, 61.
 Brahmo-Samaj, 22.
 Brailsford, H. N., 204, 205.
 Brassey, Earl of, 136.
 Brelvi, Sayyid Ahmad, 50.
 Bright, John, 50.
 British Committee of the Congress, 56.
 British India Society, 32.
 British Indian Association, 32.
 British Rule : Progress of, 11-12 ; Novelty of, 12 ; Reactionary Role of, 14-19 ; Revolutionary Role of, 19-22 ; Policy of Conciliation, 106 ; Counterpoise, 107.
 Brougham, Lord, 32.
 Burke, E., 63.
 Cabinet Delegation, 246 ; Plan, 248-249.
 Caine, W. S., 56.
 Calcutta Corporation, 82.
 Calcutta University Commission, 21.
 Cama & Co., 69.
 Carr, E. H., 19.
 Cecil, Lord Hugh, 51.
 Chamberlain, Lord., 146, 156.
 Chandravarkar, Sir Narayana, 23, 163.
 Charlu, Anand, 63, 81.
 Chauri Chaura, 169.
 Chelmsford, Lord., 138, 142.
 Chesterton, 273.
 Chetty, G. L., 33.
 Chiang Kai Shek, 233, 234.
 Chintamani, C. Y., 50, 128, 184.
 Chirol, Sir. V., 60, 86, 91, 116, 119.
 Chittagong Armoury Raid, 209.
 Christian Missions, 22, 33.
 Chundrigar, Ismail, 246.
 Churchill, 200, 233, 242.
 Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee, 177, 180.
 Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34), 9, 202, 204-206, 213, 218-219, 221.
 Civil Service Agitation, 37-38.
 Coatman, 190.
 Colvin, Sir Auckland, 40, 45, 49.
 Common-Weal, 136, 137.
 Communal Award, See Mac Donald Award.
 Communists, 223, 225, 227, 236, 238, 241.
 Comrade, 113.
 Congress, Indian National, 2, 42-43, 45 ; Bombay Session

- (1885), 47 ; Calcutta Session (1886), 48, 52, 53 ; Madras Session (1887), 48 ; Allahabad Session (1888), 49 ; Bombay Session (1889), 50 ; Lucknow Session (1899), 51 ; Banaras Session (1905), 100 ; Calcutta Session (1906), 52, 53, 54, 102 ; Surat Session (1907), 92, 103 ; Lucknow Session (1916), 141-42 ; Special Session, (Aug. 1918), 149 ; Amritsar Session (1919), 164 ; Special Calcutta Session (1920), 164 ; Nagpur Session (1920), 165 ; Ahmedabad Session (1921), 169 ; Gaya Session (1922), 178 ; Special Session Delhi (1923), 178 ; Cocanda Session, (1923), 178 ; Belgaun Session (1924), 179 ; Madras Session (1927), 197 ; Calcutta Session (1928), 196-197 ; Lahore Session (1929), 197, 201 ; Karachi Congress (March 1931), 215 ; Bombay Session (1934), 221 ; Session of 1936, 225 ; Session of 1938, 227 ; Tripuri Session (1939), 229-30 ; Ramgarh Session (1940), 232 ; Congress-League Concordat, 140-143 ; Secession of Liberals, 148 ; Constructive Programme, 175, 179, 222 ; Congress and the 1935 Act, 225-26, Negotiations with Cabinet Mission, 248-250.
- Congress, Democratic Party 175, 201.
- Connaught, Duke of., 167.
- Constituent Assembly, 232, 234, 274-75.
- Cornwallis, Lord., 58.
- Cotton, Sir Henry, 21, 38, 41, 48, 52, 70, 85.
- Crescent, 33.
- Crewe, Lord, 139.
- Cripps, Sir Stafford, 233, 234, 235, 246.
- Cripps' Mission, 233-36.
- Curzon, Lord., 6, 56, 63, 73, 81, 82, 85, 87, 88, 99, 106, 107, 110.
- Dacca Conspiracy Case, 95.
- Daily Chronicle, London., 231.
- Dalhousie, Lord., 33.
- Dar, Bishan Narain, 64.
- Das, C. R., 9, 90, 130, 164, 165, 168, 170, 176, 178, 180, 185-86, 202, 282.
- Deccan Education Society, 72, 125.
- Deccan Sabha, 34, 73.
- Delhi Durbar (1877), 35 ; (Curzon), 82 ; (19. 1), 91, 112.
- Deo, Acharya Narendra, 225, 229.
- Deo, Sankar Rao, 228.
- Desai, Bhulabhai, 225, 228, 243.
- Devonshire, the Duke of., 35.
- Dhingra, Madan Lal, 97.
- Digby, William, 19, 83.
- Disorders Inquiry Committee 1919, 159-160.
- Disraeli, 35.
- Doulattram, Jairamdas, 210, 218.
- Dufferin, Lord., 41, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 56.
- Dutt, Aswini Kumar, 94.
- Dutt, Bhupendranath, 93.
- Dutt, B. K., 194.
- Dutt, R. C., 81, 83.
- Dyer, Brigadier., 159, 160.
- East India Association, 34, 69.
- Elgin, Lord., 81, 87, 88.
- Ellenborough, Lord., 59.
- Elwins, Rev. Verrier, 206.
- Engineering College, Roorkee, 81.
- Faridpur Conference Proposals, 187.
- Fawcett, 50.
- Finlay, Lord., 160.
- Fisher, 85.
- Foward Bloc, 231.
- Fraser, Lovat, 87.
- Fuller, Sir Bampfylde, 89.
- Gandhi, M. K., 8, 10, 125, 126, 133, 139, 154, 173, 186, 189, 197, 200, 202, 211, 213, 225, 228, 229, 231, 232, 243, 244,

- 275 ; In South Africa, 86, 277 ; leads the first Satyagraha movement, 157-158 ; Sides with the Khilafatists, 161 ; Produces the New Congress Constitution, 165 ; launches Non-Cooperation 1919-20, 166 ; Interview with Reading, 167 ; Trial and Imprisonment, 169 ; Release in Feb. 1924, 179 ; Starts Civil Disobedience 1930, 203 ; Dandi March, 204 ; Arrest 5th May, 1930, 204 ; Release 25th Jan. 1931, 213 ; Negotiations with Irwin, 213 ; Interview with Wellington, 215 ; At the R. T. C., 216-218 ; Arrest 4th Jan. 1932, 218 ; Fast Unto Death at the Communal Award, 219 ; Release 8th May, 1933, 221 ; Attitude towards the Award, 223 ; Gandhi and Lenin, 226 ; Gandhi on Cripps' Proposals, 235 ; Starts August 1942 Struggle, 235 ; Gandhi and the Axis, 237-38 ; Release, May, 1945, 240, 273 ; Gandhi and Desai Proposals, 243 ; Gandhi and Rajaji's Formula, 273 ; Early Life, 276 ; Death, 276 ; Views on Swaraj, 280, 288 ; Views on Socio-Economic Problems, 280-81 ; Work as a Leader, 278-279, Work as a Nation-builder, 230 ; Gandhi as a Politician, 281-31 ; Estimate 228-229.
- Gandhian School of Thought, 283-289.
- Gandhi-Irwin Truce, 9 ; Pact, 213-14.
- Ganesh Shankar, 215.
- Ganpati Celebrations, 116, 125.
- Garrat, 92, 100, 143.
- Gayda, Signor., 218.
- George, Lloyd, 128, 132, 146, 171, 173, 200.
- Ghadar Party, 97, 124, 128, 144.
- Ghadr, 128.
- Ghosh, Aurobindo, 93, 100, 115, 116, 117, 129-30.
- Ghosh, Barendra Kumar, 93, 94, 130.
- Ghosh, Lal Mohan, 38, 63.
- Ghosh, P. C., 178.
- Gladstone, 38, 51, 103.
- Gokhale, Gopal Krishna, 17, 34, 63, 70, 72-74, 80, 82, 99, 101, 102, 116, 125, 135, 155, 158.
- Grey, Lord., 132.
- Hamdard, 113.
- Har Dayal, 97, 124, 128-129, 144.
- Hardinge, Lord., 7, 91, 112-114, 133, 139, 286.
- Harijan Seva Sangh, 220.
- Hasan, Maulana Mohammad-ul, 161.
- Hasan, Syed Zafrul, 271.
- Hem Chandra, 94.
- Hijrat, movement of, 162-163.
- Hilton-Young Commission, 191.
- Hindu, 48.
- Hindu Mahasabha, 195, 235.
- Hindu Muslim Riots, 175, 178, 188, 215, 251, 274.
- Hindu Patriot, 32, 33.
- Hitler, Adolf, 237.
- Holland, W.E.S., 156.
- Home Rule League, 136, 137-138.
- Home Rule Movement, 134-140.
- Hoare, Sir. Samuel, 216, 224.
- Hotson, Sir., E., 210.
- Howrah Conspiracy Case (1910), 95.
- Hume, A.O., 42, 43, 45-46, 49, 51.
- Hume, Joseph, 42.
- Hunter, Lord., 159.
- Hunter, Sir, William, 18, 58, 60.
- Hurry, W.C., 32.
- Hussain, Mohammad Afzal, 271.
- Hussain, Munshi Sajjad, 50.
- Hutchinson, Lester, 43.
- Ibbetson, Sir Denzil, 95.
- Ilbert, Sir Courtney, 39.
- Imam, Sir Ali, 195.
- Imam, Sir Syed Ali, 111.
- Independents, 188.
- Indian Association, 36, 39, 40, 41.

- Indian Christians Conference, 195.
 Indian National Union, 43.
 India Home Rule Society, 96.
 Indian National Army, 237, 238-40.
 I. N. A. Trials, 241.
 Indian Parliamentary Committee, 56.
 Indian Sociologist, 96.
 Individual Civil Disobedience (1940), 232.
 Industrial Commission (1916), 140.
 International Pro-India Committee, 144.
 Iqbal, Sir Mohammad, 265, 266.
 Irwin, Lord, 188, 199, 213.
 Ismail, Mohammad, 246.
 Iyengar, C. D., 184.
 Iyengar, S. Kasturi Ranga, 177.
 Iyengar, Srinivasa, 178, 193, 201.
 Iyer, G. Subramaniya, 47.
 Iyer, Sir Sivaswamy, 184.
 Jackson, Sir Stanley, 210.
 Jackson, 56.
 Jallianwallah Massacre, 159, 204.
 Jamiat-ul Ulema-e-Hind, 161.
 Japan, Victory over Russia, 85.
 Jaykar, M. R. 189, 193, 210.
 Jay Prakash, 225, 230, 236.
 Jezirat-ul Arab, 160.
 Jinnah, M. A., 136, 141, 147, 164, 166, 175, 184, 193, 243, 244, 266, 273, 274, 277.
 Kaiser, 134, 145.
 Kant, 63.
 Kelkar, 189.
 Kennedy, Miss and Mrs., 94, 126.
 Kesari, 87, 92, 96, 115, 125.
 Khan, H. H. Aga, 109, 141.
 Khan, Hakim Ajmal, 113, 162, 177.
 Khan, Sir Firoz, 246.
 Khan, Malik Khizr Hayat, 244.
 Khan, Liaquat Ali, 243.
 Khan, Shaukat Hayat, 246.
 Khan, Sheikh Raza Hussain, 50.
 Khan, Salimullah, 110.
 Khan, Sir Syed Ahmad, 14, 49, 60, 61, 82, 109.
 Khilafat Agitation, 160-163.
 Khilafat Deputation, 162.
 Kichlu, Dr., 158.
 King, George V., Visit 1911, 112, Kingsford, 94.
 Kohn, Hans, 23, 24, 126.
 Komagatu Maru, 144.
 Kriplani, Acharya., J. B. 228.
 Krishnavarma, Shyamaji, 96, 145.
 Labour Party (Britain), India Policy, 245.
 Lala, Lajpat Rai, 44, 57, 75, 86, 91, 92, 95, 100, 104, 105, 115, 121, 122, 123, 127-28, 129, 136, 164, 170, 176, 188, 189, 194, 195; Lajpat Rai's Resolution, 1928, 193.
 Lala, Murlidhar, 17, 18.
 Land Holder's Society, 32.
 Lansdowne, Lord, 52, 57, 81.
 Latif, Dr. Syed Abdul, 231, 268.
 Lenin, 190, 226.
 Linlithgo, Lord., 226, 232.
 Locke, 21.
 Lytton, Lord., 6, 31, 34-37, 42, 44, 45.
 Lytton, Governor of Bengal, 185.
 Macaulay, 12, 20.
 MacDonald Award, 219-220, 223.
 Mac Donald, 21, 179, 197, 211, 215, 219.
 Mac Donnell, Anthony, 51.
 Macnicol, Rev., 116, 156.
 Madras Native Association, 13.
 Mahendra Pratap, 129, 145.
 Mahmud, Dr. Syed, 210.
 Maizzini, 130.
 Malaviya Madan Mohan, 52, 67, 164, 166, 167, 171, 176, 188, 215, 216, 217, 220, 223.
 Malik, Subodh Chandra, 90.
 Masani, R. P., 68.
 Mayo, Lord., 60.
 Mazumdar, A. C., 56, 66.
 Mecca, Grand Sharif of, 140.
 Meerut Trials, 198-199.
 Mehta, Sir Pherozeshah, 33, 50, 51, 63, 65, 102, 135.

- Memorandum on Reforms (1916), 142.
 Mesopotamia Commission, 133, 146.
 Mill, John Stuart, 21, 63.
 Milton, 22.
 Minto, Lord., 74, 86, 91, 96, 98, 101, 103, 106, 107, 108, 109.
 Minto-Morley Reforms, 7, 73, 106-107.
 Mittra, Rajendra Lal, 53.
 Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association, 62.
 Mohammedan Association, 41.
 Mohani, Hasrat Maulvi, 162.
 Montagu, 80, 93, 106, 124, 126, 140, 146-147, 153, 160, 173, 199, 278.
 Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, 7, 8, 140, 148-149, 164, 174.
 Montmorency, Sir G. de, 210.
 Mookerjee, Shyama Prasad, 237.
 Moonje, Dr., 170, 189.
 Moplahs Rebellion of, 172.
 Morley, 74, 90, 95, 98, 102, 106, 107, 108, 140.
 Morrison, Sir. Theodore, 15.
 Moshin-ul-Mulk, Nawab, 109.
 Muddiman, Sir Alexander, 183.
 Muddiman Committee, 183.
 Mukerjee, Sir Ashutosh, 21, 98.
 Mukerjee, Harish Chandra, 33.
 Mudholkar, R. N., 51.
 Muslim Communalism, 58, 60, 61, 107-108, 175, 246, 251.
 Muslim Deputation (1906), 109-110.
 Muslim League, 9, 110-111, 113, 195, 246, 267, 268-74 ; Day of Deliverance, 231, 235 ; Negotiations at the Simla Conference, 243 ; Negotiations with the Cabinet Delegation, 246, 274.
 Muslim Medical Mission to Turkey, 113.
 Mussolini, Benito, 191, 218.
 Mutiny, 2, 12-14.
 Naidu, Sarojini, 169, 215, 217.
 Nair, Sir Sankaran, 163.
 Naoroji, Dadabhai, 3, 4, 6, 34, 44, 47, 48, 52, 53, 63, 65, 68-70, 83, 102.
 Nariman, K. F., 222.
 National College, Calcutta, 130.
 National Conferences, 40-41.
 National Council of Education, 90.
 Nationalist Muslim Party, 215.
 Nationalist Party, 185, 194, 203, 223.
 Natu Brothers, 81, 88, 125.
 Nava Sakti, 93.
 Nehru, Kamla, 225.
 Nehru, Jawaharlal, 5, 83, 131, 138, 156, 170, 172, 190, 194, 198, 201, 210, 213, 222, 225, 230, 231, 232, 238, 240, 266, 267, 273, 275, 278, 279, 281, 290.
 Nehru, Motilal, 9, 165, 166, 168, 170, 176, 177, 178, 183, 184, 186, 188, 189, 191, 193, 195, 200, 202, 210, 213, 222.
 Nehru Report, 195-196.
 Nevins, 99, 118.
 New India, 126.
 New India, Besant's Paper, 136, 148.
 Non-Cooperation Movement 1920-21, 8, 166-172.
 Non-Violence, the Law of Progress, 284 ; Meaning of, 284-285 ; Application to Politics, 286-87.
 North-brook, Lord, 35, 42.
 Norton, Eardley, 48, 51.
 Obeidulla, Maulvi, 145.
 O'Dwyer, Sir Michael, 159, 177.
 Olcott, Henry Steele, 24.
 Olivier, Lord., 183, 186.
 Pakistan, The movement for, 265-267 ; Projects of, 268-273.
 Pal, Bipin Chandra, 90, 100, 102, 115, 116, 118, 119, 120, 130-131, 164, 165, 176, 277.
 Pant, Govind Ballabh, 229.
 Pant Resolution, 229-230.
 Paranjpye, Dr. R. P., 184.
 Parnell, Charles Stewart, 181.
 Partition of Bengal, 54, 82, 88,

- 99, 101, 112 ; Movement against, 88-91.
 Pasha, Kemal Ataturk, 175.
 Patel, Vallabh-bhai, 204, 210, 225, 227, 228, 241.
 Patel, Vithal-bhai, 9, 177, 178, 184, 188.
 Patriotic Association, 61.
 Pattabhi, Dr. 65, 67, 178, 229, 235.
 Peel, Lord., 173, 177.
 Perry, Sir Erskine, 69.
 Pethick-Lawrence, 245.
 Phayre, Col., 69.
 Pillai, Chempakaraman, 144.
 Poona Pact, 220, 223.
 Pradhan, R. G., 85.
 Prasad, Babu Rajendra, 220, 221, 225, 228.
 Prince of Wales, Visit: (1906), 101 ; Visit (1921-22), 168, 174.
 Proclamation, Victoria's, 13.
 Public Services Commission, 1888, 81 ; 1912, 112.
 Punjab, Colonisation Bill, 95.
 Punjabee, 127.
 'Punjabi, 268, 272.
 Punch, 50.
 Purna Swaraj, Day 202 : Declaration, 202-203.
 Quit India Resolution, 236.
 Racial Bitterness, 14-16.
 Rahim, Sir Abdur, 175.
 Rajah, M. C., 220.
 Rajagopalachari, C., 161, 177, 178, 220, 225, 227, 232, 273, 274.
 Rajaji's Formula, 273-74.
 Ram Krishna, 28 ; Mission, 84.
 Rana, S. R., 97.
 Ranade, Mahadeo Govind, 23, 34, 44, 48, 72, 125.
 Rand, 87, 96.
 Rao, Sir T. Madhava, 48.
 Rasool, A., 90.
 Ray, P. C., 179.
 Reading, Lord, 167, 171, 200.
 Red Shirts, 210.
 Reform Movement, 22-25.
 Responsivists, 188-189.
 Revolutionaries, 93-98, 121-125, 144-145, 209-210.
 Ripon, Lord., 6, 34, 38-40, 42, 45, 47.
 Rolland, Romain, 23, 218.
 Ronaldshay, Lord, (Zetland), 64, 84, 91, 94, 209, 211.
 Round Table Conference, 9, 200, 207 208, 210, 211 ; Announcement of, 199 ; Boycott by the Congress, 201 ; First R. T. C., 211-213 ; 2nd R.T.C., 216-218 ; 3rd. R. T. C., 221.
 Rousseau, 21.
 Rowlatt Bills, 156-157.
 Roy, Raja Ram Mohan, 22-23, 32.
 Sabarmati Pact, 189.
 Saklatwala, 192.
 Salisbury, Lord., 18, 35, 37, 42.
 Sandhya, 93.
 Sankarsett, Juggannath, 33.
 Sapru, Sir Tej Bahadur, 168, 173, 184, 192, 195, 210.
 Saraswati, Dayanand, 23.
 Sarvajanic Sabha, 34, 73.
 Sastri, Srinivasa, 218, 224.
 Satyagraha Movement, 157-158.
 Satyapal, Dr., 158.
 Savarkar, Ganesb., 96, 97, ———, Vinayak Damodar, 97.
 Sayani, Rahimatulla Mohammad, 59, 66.
 Sen, Keshav Chandra, 23.
 Sen, Surjya Kumar, 209.
 Servants of India Society, 74.
 Shakespeare, 22.
 Shankaracharya, 23.
 Sharifuddin, 51.
 Shekhareswar, Raja, 49.
 Shiva Prasad, Raja, 61.
 Shiva Raj, 245.
 Shivaji Celebrations, 92, 116, 125.
 Shraddhanand, Swami, 162, 165, 175.
 Sikh League, 195.
 Simla Conference, 242-245.
 Simon Commission, 9, 185, 197 ; Boycott of, 192-194 ; Report of, 206-207.

- Simon, Sir John, 192, 193, 200.
 Sinha, Lord, S. P., 153, 192.
 Sircar, Dr. S. C., 88.
 Skeen, Sir Andrew, 188 : Commission, 188, 191.
 Smith, Col. Dunlop, 109.
 Socialists, 223, 225, 227, 230, 236-237.
 Spencer, 21, 63.
 Stalin, 190.
 States' Peoples Conference, 195.
 Subramaniya. Dr. 138.
 Subrawardy, 246.
 Sunderland, J. T. 127.
 Swadeshi, Exhibition, 79; Movement, 7, 80, 88-91, 102.
 Swarajists, Party, 175-176 ; Struggle in the Congress, 178-179 ; Aims and Methods, 179-182 ; Work in the Legislatures, 182-186 ; Demoralisation, 186-189.
 Tagore, Dwarkanatha, 32.
 —, Rabindranath, 90, 155, 230, 288.
 Tambe, S. B., 188.
 Tara Singh, 243.
 Tata & Company, 80, 198, 237.
 Thakurdas, Sir Purshotamdas, 191.
 Theosophical Society, 24-25, 43, 84, 135.
 Thompson, Edward, 280.
 —, George, 32.
 Thornton, W. T., 18.
 Times, London, 86, 218.
 Tilak, Bal Gangadhar, 74, 81, 87, 88, 91, 92, 96, 100, 102, 105, 112, 115, 118, 125-127, 131, 135, 138, 147, 163, 175,
 Tilak Memorial Swaraj Fund, 166.
 Trade Union Movement, 191, 198.
 Treaty of Sevres, 160.
 Tyabji, Badruddin, 48.
 Unionist Party, 244.
 United Services Club, Simla, 88.
 Ved Samaj, 23.
 Vidya Sagar, Ishwar Chand, 71.
 Victoria, 13, 35 ; Diamond Jubilee, 81, 87.
 Vivekanand, 24, 84, 93, 123, 126.
 Voltaire, 21.
 Wacha, D.E., 18, 33, 55, 63.
 Wadia, B. P., 138.
 Wahabi Movement, 60.
 Wavell, Lord, 242, 247.
 Wedderburn, W., 44, 48, 56, 111, 112, 114, 141.
 Welby Commission, 68, 73.
 White Paper on Reforms, 224.
 Whitley Commission, 199.
 Willingdon, Lord, 215.
 Willocks, Sir James, 134.
 Wilson, President, 133.
 Winterton, Lord, 174.
 Wordsworth, Principal, 48.
 World War II, 231 ; Germany's war against Russia, 232 ; Japan's entry, 232 ; End of War 245.
 Young, Sir Hilton, 191.
 Younghusband, 129.
 Yugantar, 93.
 Yule, George, 49.
 Zacharias, Dr. H. C. E., 107, 136, 166, 181, 216.
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